

The gradually worsening circumstances had prompted me at an early stage to consider my measures in the event of an Italian surrender. My main effort was still directed at creating clarity at the front and preventing the expansion of the Allied successes. In this I saw the most effective means of keeping the Italian Wehrmacht and thus the Italian leadership in line in the first place. This "keeping them in line" was more important to me than possibly creating a new enemy by Italy's withdrawal. For to be expected Italian leadership - if the war went on - would seek to improve its position by participating in the war on the other side. The resulting inevitable fratricidal war was bound to be detrimental to German cause as well.

In the first place, I tried to bring our view on further combat leadership to a common denominator in personal talks or talks conducted by my staff with the *Esercito*, the *Supermarina*, and the *Superaerea* liaison officers of the Italian parts of the Wehrmacht on my staff supported me in this without reservation.

They fought for their position, but were just as happy to make concessions. However, the fact that the agreement to transfer Italian forces to Calabria and Apulia could only be reached shortly before the capitulation gave pause for thought. Was Jodl right in his assessment of Roatta? Wasn't this merely to conceal the Italian leadership's deception, which had become all too obvious? Possible that Roatta, without knowing anything about the ongoing surrender negotiations, received Ambrosio's and Badoglio's approval only at this late stage. Possible - but not exactly probable.

Subordinate Italian front line commanders in southern Italy and on the islands of Sardinia and Corsica, I have also spoken personally during these weeks and everywhere found the greatest, trusting understanding. I also found that the German commanders enjoyed the same comradely cooperation. On behalf of myself and my commanders I believe I must say that, despite the suspicions forced upon us, we have not changed our positive attitude toward

the Italian Wehrmacht and its objectives Up to the eve of the fall of Italy, our work and efforts were devoted mainly to our tasks given by our alliance obligations. Only an infinitesimally small part of this work was reserved for preparations for the fall of the "Axis" - for some even still with inner reluctance, as I noted in Sardinia,

With the admirals of the front, Commander-in-Chief South had little personal contact during this period Supermarina had been directly affected in the war ports of Sicily by the shift of the war to S, had also taken over some alert security in Tarent-Brindisi during the operations in Sicily in view of the still existing possibility of a landing in Calabria For the rest, it had rest for intensive preparation of the major operation against the landing on the Italian coastal front, was certain to occur soon Discussions on deployment of the fleet were in constant progress between Commander-in-Chief South and Supermarina On the very day of the drop, a meeting was to be held between myself and Admiral de Courten on the final deployment of the fleet against the invasion fleet off Naples-that is, with the admiral under whose command the fleet would then sail from La Spezia for surrender to the Allies

Field Marshal v. Richthofen and his staff dealt with the Italian Air Force. It no longer had much to offer. The ground organization was now generously provided. Italian fighter pilots and fighters retrained on German aircraft under German guidance and were trained in proven German air combat tactics. It was in the Luftwaffe that mutual esteem had been most clearly maintained; the flying element unites and holds. On the whole, however, Italian aviation could not be said to be operational and dropped out for the events.

The flak was down-to-earth; as far as it had German material, it was deployed in northern Italy and on the railroads. Interspersed with top German personnel, it did its job well and badly. The Italian material was

outdated and had only dummy value. In the person of General v. Pohl, the German Flakwaffe had an excellent, Italian-friendly representative at the Italian Flakwaffe. Unfortunately, General Fougier did not really like the organizational change we proposed, namely the integration of the Flakwaffe into the Luftwaffe. organization therefore remained unsettled and unsatisfactory to the end; the Italian Flwasa factor of importance any possible necessary confrontation with the Italian Wehrmacht

I drawn this cross-section of the three Italian Wehrmacht elements show that I, as the German responsible commander-in-chief, had no reason to doubt their good will and willingness to continue the war
The case "Axis

Unfortunately, the picture outside the front sector was different. Here there was reasonable suspicion for Italy's leaving the alliance treaty and therefore an order from the OKW to carry out the necessary security measures for the German Wehrmacht in Italy. They ran under the code name "Axis", the issuance of which was to automatically trigger all intended actions.

The measures for the "axis" case were mainly defensive in nature. Since one could only assume the worst, the "how, where and when" remained unknown factors, the basis for countermeasures was very modest. The most important thing in these preparations was to deal with all possible options. Therefore, as far as the tactical side was concerned, I did not issue any written orders (e.g., Rome case), but only discussed my intentions with the commanders in question. With all front-line commanders and the leaders of the navy and air force I reviewed their intentions and measures on the spot (e.g., on the islands) and brought them into line. The fact that all movements were carried out successfully justifies the method of command I chose in

this unsettled situation. Moreover, this was the best way to preserve secrecy, which was of utmost importance especially in this case

The main guidelines were:

Clearance of the endangered fronts, including the isolated island garrisons, whereby the material stocks were to be salvaged to the greatest possible extent and arrangements were to be envisaged with the Italian commanders to enable the detachment. Where difficulties were to be expected, measures necessary in the case of the "Axis" to be facilitated by temporary, inconspicuous deployment or relocation of material. In the period of "imminent fall," the disengagement was not to be made more difficult by further supply of units and supplies.

On the islands and on the Calabrian front, the dismounting movements were to be carried out without a fight; but where resistance by Italian formations began, the line was to be fought clear by all available means. On the expected invasion front and in the greater Rome area, the fight to clear the situation could hardly be avoided.

The liaison officers assigned to the Italian staffs were to supervise the activity of the staffs; they were warning posts for their commanders, on whose report even the securing of these staffs or of the most authoritative personalities was to be provided.

To increase self-protection, evacuation of towns was ordered, and where this was not feasible, local consolidation of German services in defensible installations.

The Air Fleet had to lay its hand immediately on all airworthy machines and the anti-aircraft guns. "Axis" The navy was to prevent the Italian ships from leaving the port so that they could later be put into German service.

Finally, the occupation of all militarily important intelligence installations was intended to make Italian command and control more difficult, if not impossible.

From the outset I had rejected the general capture of the Italian troops for my area, since it, in itself difficult to carry out, could do more harm than good.

For my and Air Fleet 2 headquarters in Frascati, anti-aircraft protection and army security units - the latter in the Alban Hills - been reinforced and shelters enlarged

This period up to the fall of Italy was a special mental burden for my commanders and me. For me as a soldier, the double game imposed on me by the ally and Hitler seemed unbearable. The inner contradictions between the apostasy, which seemed intellectually possible, and the unswerving faith in the Italian leaders close to me and in the word of the king and the head of the government, the not always pleasant conversations with the Führer's headquarters, the burden of the war operations in Sicily and southern Italy and the extension of the air war into the Italian area, as well as the prospect of a rather foggy future, gradually had a nerve-racking effect. And yet I was happy to be able to say to myself, on the day of the bombing of my headquarters, the Allied invasion of the Bay of Salerno, and the flight of the royal family and government from Rome, that I had done all that was humanly possible to preclude this move on the part of the Italians and that, on the other hand, I taken all military measures in such a way that the German cause could suffer no avoidable damage.

The Day of the Fall - September 8, 1943

There was nothing in the morning hours to indicate that this day was to be fateful for the Mediterranean. Meetings with Roatta and de Courten were scheduled. As the anti-aircraft batteries fired on the Allied task force approaching Frascati, I held a major briefing on defensive measures against the invasion expected those days. The first bombs fell as soon as I left my

workroom next to my glass veranda, while the further attacks brought many hits near my shelter. The enemy bombing brought the heaviest damage and casualties not so much to the military staffs, although there too there were considerable losses, as to the city and its population. I immediately alerted all troops to come to the rescue.

bombing was very revealing because a map recovered from a downed airplane showed my and Richthofen's command posts exactly to the house, which indicated a good reconnaissance and intelligence service on the Italian side. He put my headquarters out of action only for a very short time, which speaks for exemplary installation of the intelligence network. The King and Badoglio had permitted the attack, although I could not have resisted a request to move my headquarters to a less populous place, nor would I have done so. Air raid wardens and firemen from Rome were already at the entrance to Frascati when I left my command post a few minutes after the attack, which certainly indicated prior knowledge of the attack. This meant that both the Italians and the Allies had laid their cards on the table.

I had to expect landing on the night of September 8/9, 1945, and to assume an apparent agreement between Italy and the Allies.

But even after the air raid at noon change in behavior of the Italian command authorities meeting with Roatta on Monte Rotondo was attended by my boss and General Toussaint, Rintelen's successor. On my behalf I myself spoke again with all front commanders, ordered the highest alert, and authorized the immediate transfer of the German naval command from Rome to the Frascati area. In the evening hours I received a call from Jodl asking whether the radio message about the surrender of Italy was correct. Since I had not heard anything about it, I agreed to call later. My query was answered with the astonishing information that the radio message was a deliberate misdirection and that the war would continue. Thereupon I categorically demanded an immediate denial of this extraordinarily

dangerous false message by the Italian government. This did not happen, since in the meantime the government had to publicly acknowledge the agreement I received the first news of this again through Colonel General Jodl, who informed me of Badoglio's radio, which had arrived in the meantime at the Führer's headquarters. I informed General Toussaint and Westphal, who, on their very energetic inquiry, heard from General Roatta that the whole thing was a hoax. generals' discussion continued; General Westphal did not report back to me until late in the evening I already feared that he and Toussaint had been detained in Monte Rotondo. In the evening between 8 and 9 p.m. Roatta called and solemnly declared that the news had surprised him too and that he had not played a comedy. I assume with certainty that Badoglio and Ambrosio did not want to have informed Commander-in-Chief South truthfully in order to prevent him from taking immediate countermeasures. Once the situation had been clarified, it was no longer possible to take countermeasures, since the royal family and the government had evaded any further action by fleeing from Rome. This picture characterizes the internally corrupt Italian leadership, which, by its paralyzed will to fight of the strong units provided for its protection thus also, gratifyingly for Commander-in-Chief South, prevented intended Allied air landing in the Rome area.

I still had the opportunity to speak with Jodl and my front leaders. The OKW had to leave us to our fate; at the Führer's headquarters Commander-in-Chief South had been written off. I did not receive any more orders. After the keyword "Axis" had already been passed on, I had briefly told the front commanders once again particularly important for the coming days. When in the late evening hours the invasion fleet was still detected by the air reconnaissance in the sea area off Naples, I could consider the greatest danger for the situation in Italy as averted. Now an even heavier responsibility rested on the 10th Army in southern Italy, which, however,

also weighed on me, since I could expect no help from Army Group B. The reports from Rome reached me that very night sounded more critical than the situation actually was. The diplomatic corps with the German families was deported to the Reich under the responsible leadership of the ambassador.

Could this unfortunate development of the situation have been avoided? That is a question I asked myself then and still ask today.

First of all, I confess that the clarification of the situation made my heart lighter. I saw the enemy and could act. I also confess that with the withdrawal of the Italian Wehrmacht, which was no longer willing to fight, there was no big gap. Where there was fighting now, I knew that at least the best was being striven for. But still - Italy, having entered the war against Germany's will, was a card now missing from the game. This outcome could have been avoided if the theater of war so heavily equipped with German forces from the three branches of the Wehrmacht that the Allies could not have gained a foothold on the Italian mainland or that they could have been thrown back into the sea. The first was missed, the last was not possible in terms of forces. The king and the government were willing to break up over the head of their ally. Even allowing for Hitler's idiosyncrasies, I could imagine that the goal could have been achieved in a decent and satisfactory way. In the first place, Mussolini, who was precisely Hitler's friend, should not have been treated in this way. Mussolini might have been able to convince Hitler of Italy's war weariness. Hitler, too, knew that the effective value of the Italian Wehrmacht in this hard struggle was an extraordinarily small one. If it had been possible to eliminate Italy as a base for enemy warfare, it might have been possible to obtain Hitler's agreement to a peaceful solution of the alliance treaty. For Italy, this would have brought the very greatest advantages - Italy's war damage would have been hardly worth mentioning. The more significant and difficult question would have been whether the Allies would have

agreed to such a condition on an offer of surrender. This of course, is very difficult to assess. From a purely political point of view, the surrender of one of the Allies' three opponents would have been valuable to them not only propagandistically but also practically.

Be that as it may, the fact that the German Wehrmacht in Italy, which never neglected its alliance obligation but fought to point of bleeding to death for Italian interests, was betrayed in such a way will always remain an indelible stain on Italy's leadership at the time Cavallero's end.

Immediately after the surrender of the Italian force group near Rome under General Carboni, I gave orders leading Fascists to prison, including Count Cavallero. With some other Italians, Count Cavallero was my guest. They all arrived in a getup that I understand only today as a former prisoner. Count Cavallero gave me the kiss of welcome, unknown to me until then, when they arrived.

I took the mental state of the gentlemen into consideration, only pointing out that their own safety required them to go to Germany temporarily. This was to be done in the next few days by airplanes. Count Cavallero was very worried about his wife, who was seriously ill in a hospital. He would have to visit her tomorrow - a request that I, of course, gladly fulfilled. He spent several hours with his wife and thanked me profusely. At dinner on the second day I gave him to understand that I would like to take his wife under my personal care and maintain the connection between the two spouses during what hoped only a short stay in Germany. I also hinted to him that Hitler held him in particularly high esteem and that he would certainly propose him to Mussolini for his new government as Minister of War. Count Cavallero was exceptionally serious during dinner, which I attributed

to the excitement of the last few weeks and his parting his wife. He took early leave and was taken to his quarters by one of my escorting officers. Early in the morning I was startled by the news that Count Cavallero, sitting in the garden overlooking Rome, had been found shot. The medical and forensic examination I immediately ordered resulted in a flawless determination of suicide. Among other things, it was learned through questioning of his Italian friends that Cavallero had walked up and down his room a great deal during the night and gone to the garden very early.

What was the occasion? As far as I could find out, Count Cavallero was involved in a conspiracy against Mussolini. Mussolini could have become aware of this. The trip to Germany had to bring him back into Mussolini's circle of vision and the realization of Hitler's plan into direct contact with the Duce. This was unbearable for Cavallero. In his desperate mood, he no longer saw a path leading to a decent future. Regrettably that he did not open to me.

I have cited this tragic episode because I heard in Venice, even before the trial began, and also read in the newspapers, allusions to Count Cavallero having been shot by me or at my instigation. In the courtroom in Venice I repeat here in approximately the same words:

"I held Count Cavallero in high esteem and gave him my unconditional support because in him I had come to know a conscious friend of the Axis who saw furtherance of common interests, the greatest advantage for Italy, for which he unreservedly - against all odds - devoted his life. Far above average in talent, outstanding in military ability, he was a

Man who combined a high degree of energy with shrewd diplomatic skills and who, in my opinion, was the only one at the time who could reconcile the Italian wartime military force with the wartime economy. I say this consciously in full knowledge of the weaknesses also inherent in him and of the great antagonism in part of the officer corps of the Italian

armed forces against this man."

King Victor Emmanuel III, Mussolini and Hitler

One must address Mussolini as an unrestrained dictator, but one must add in the same breath that he knew how to fulfill his duties to the royal family. However, later events reveal with frightening clarity how little the king must have inwardly agreed with his head of government during the long years of collaboration. This is all the more striking because Mussolini's aspiration to expand his power coincided with those of the king. Both may have untrue to each other, but both

Mussolini and Hitler came from small backgrounds; they went through the low points of a difficult life for many years, only to emerge victorious over their adversaries, growing stronger in constant struggle. Both were in a certain sense self-taught with an ambitious and restless striving for political and intellectual education. Both remained faithful to a simple way of life that allowed them to find their way to the masses of the people. Both were brilliant orators; knew how to open hearts of the masses; were creators of people-moving parties with new programs; both had concrete goals in mind, which they tried to achieve all possible, permitted and usual, but also dangerous and not always moral means; they also both overtook themselves in their efficiency. Both failed, indirectly or directly, because of their will. The differences that appear on the outside are to be seen more as attributes of their belonging to different peoples than as real contrasts.

Mussolini went into politics through the editorships of socialist newspapers and remained a politician. He mastered diplomatic customs and opportunities; used them primarily for his and his people's expansionist ambitions. He skillfully knew how to use their reinforcement and modernization of the army, navy and air; deliberately arranged minister of the

various branches of the armed forces, his own politics. His military training, however, was not enough to let him recognize the reality, the factual core of the dazzling splendor of his Wehrmacht. Outwardly and also ideologically Hitler's friend, he envied his military position of power and his successes. Not least for this reason he got involved in military adventures that led his career to a tragic end.

the time when I came into closer contact with Mussolini, he had passed peak in health and in his position of power. Unconditional faith of his followers was on the wane, his energy was no longer sufficient to take decisive measures, he increasingly gave as his decision what his advisors suggested to him, until after his reinstatement in a reduced position of power on Lake Garda devoted himself more and more to reflective and philosophical contemplations, which caused the man of action in him to wither away. He was no longer a dictator but a man who, through the errors of life, had to a higher understanding and for that reason alone should not have emotional, disgusting exit.

Hitler's birth as the future ruler of the German people was during World War I and in the troubled postwar period. During the years from 1921 to 1945, he felt himself first and foremost a soldier, even in his political heyday. That is why his political organizations given a military dress, that is why he created a Wehrmacht that was pleasing to the eye but could also meet the highest war requirements in its inner values and material equipment. He rejected half-measures, he went all out until he became autocrat as a leader. Supported by a very effective propaganda, he seemed to have become the idol of the masses. No wonder that he gradually came to believe in his uniqueness and his irreplaceability, which imposed on him the obligation to do his lifetime - he did not believe in a long life - all that he considered necessary for Germany's greatness and security in all the future. Unlike Mussolini, to whom he was and remained an unconditional

friend, he was the almighty; Hitler, who in the early years had paladins and men he trusted working in a truly generous manner, turned into the opposite in the course of the war, as he no longer believed himself served by his advisors as he wished, and later felt not understood by most of them, finally abandoned and betrayed. It is psychologically interesting that he, who was undoubtedly superior in many areas, had inferiority complexes, which were acted out in the rejection of every free opinion and in the persecution of presumed or real opponents. overload caused by the concentration of actually all tasks and decisions on his person led to the well-known outbursts of temper, to lightning decisions, which often resulted in inhumanities. Just as he had chained people's lives his own, so his end surrounded his people's post-war fate. Haunted by fate, abandoned by "his" people, he went into the afterlife broken and unredeemed.

For all their similarities, Mussolini and Hitler were victims of their will to power, their uncontrolled dictatorship. It was not enough, as Hitler intended, to set a senate as a supervisory body over the "Führer" - *principiis obsta!* Such "forces of nature" need from the outset a bond which even the greatest in the world should create for their own and their people's benefit. Whatever dress a dictatorship may appear, it is short-lived and disintegrates in itself if it does not subject itself to external and internal laws.

18.

THE BATTLES AT SALERNO AND THE STRUGGLE TO BUILD A DEFENSIVE FRONT SOUTH OF

Timetable: 9.9.1943 Landing of the American 5th Army under General Clark near Salerno - 9. to 16.9.1943 Battle of Salerno - From 9.9.1943 Disarmament of the Italian units in the German area - 10.9.1943 Occupation of Rome - 16.9. 1943 Break off of the German counterattacks near Salerno - 20.9.1943 Completion of the evacuation of Sardinia by German units - 9/27/1943 Allies take the important air base of Foggia - 9/30/10/1943 Evacuation of Naples by German troops - 10/5/1943 Completion of the evacuation of Corsica by German troops - October 1943 Fighting around the Voltumo line, the narrows of Mignano and on the Adriatic.

With the defection of Italy, Germany's purely military interests came to the fore; in the first period they alone became decisive. absolute emptiness in the area was only gradually filled the supply of some divisions, the General Command LXXVI P.K. and the Army 10 under General Panzer Troops v. Vietinghoff established on whole from its own stocks*)

*) I. Distribution of strength and forces on 8.9.1943

A) Ob South (Fm. Kesselring)

1.1 0. A r m e e with:

XIV Pz. K. with 16th Pz. Div. partly in action, in reserve or in relief of Italian forces, F. S. Pz. D. "H. G." in refreshment and action

LXXVI Pz. K. in Calabria fighting British 8th Army with 29th Pz. Gr. Div.

(in need of refreshment from Sicily), 26th Pz. Div,

1. Fj. Div. in Apulia; one-third in reserve behind Salerno Front.

The invasion of Sicily and the seizure of the island had revealed the aim and purpose of the Allied operations in the Mediterranean. A probability attack could be expected to continue against the Apennine Peninsula. Italy, in its present state of paralysis, could be devastatingly defeated; with Italy's withdrawal from the alliance with Germany, the Allies had unimagined opportunities to intensify the air war against Germany, to make a decisive impact on the southern base of the German Eastern Front and on France. As Commander-in-Chief South, I had to prepare myself for this. Short term doubts arose when - incomprehensibly for me - the Strait of Messina was not immediately pushed; whether Sicily with its extensive ports (Syracuse, Augusta) should be the starting point for a far-reaching Balkan operation? I could not come to terms with this idea, since for Allied operations in the Balkans a base in the favorable sea and air bases of Apulia, also as flank security, was indispensable. An attack on southern Italy - regardless of whether it was conducted as a main or secondary attack - had to be reckoned. Other intentions became apparent as a result of the enemy's distribution of forces, especially naval forces. An invasion of central Italy north of Rome and on the Adriatic was ruled out by me.

2. XI. Fl. K. in Rome area with 3rd Pz. Gr. Div. Lake Bolsena, Livorno and

south, 2nd Fj. div. south Rome.

3. 90. pz. Gr. Div. with fortress brigade on the island of Sardinia
4. SS Brigade "Reichsführer" on the island of Corsica

5. Air Fleet 2 with strong aviation and anti-aircraft forces

on the peninsula of Italy,

on the island of Sardinia and

on the island of Corsica

6. Navy - K d o. Italy with light floating forces in the

Tyrrhenian Sea

B) H. Gr. B (Fm. Rommel)

1. LXXXVII A. K. with 76th I Div, 94th I Div, 305th I Div, and 24th Pz Div.

2. LI. G e b. K o r p s with SS Pz. Div. "Adolf Hitler," 65th I. Div., 44th I. Div.

(Hoch- und Deutschmeister) and Geb. Brigade Doehla

3. Witthöft Corps with 71st I. D. and smaller units

II. To the German land forces in southern Italy including Rome

in strength of 8 divisions were opposed by Allied forces: 2 LL Div., 10 Div. and several brigades and groups, by Italian forces: 5 Div., together 17 Div. and others.

III. On the German side, 8 divisions fought in southern Italy,

northern Italy, 8% of the divisions, two of which would have been enough to repel the Allied attacks in the south, were not involved in the decisive battles

German distribution of forces on

These operations involved extraordinary dangers that the Allied forces in the Mediterranean at the time could not cope with. A landing operation in Apulia had to be accompanied by an offensive through Calabria, which put them in possession of the Abruzzo passes

In the foreground of all considerations was the politically and operationally equally important goal of Rome, which could only be reached very slowly by land alone, but much more quickly with an invasion from the Tyrrhenian Sea. For such an operation, apart from the landing in the greater Rome area, the bay of Salerno offered itself in the first place; it fulfilled all requirements almost uniquely.

On 3-/4 September 1943, the Allies played the first card. Montgomery's army crossed the Strait of Messina and began its attack through mountainous Calabria; it was slow to gain ground. With the exception of a landing at Pizzo *) at 5 a.m. on 8 September, the British command to our delight, from making any major landings which might become very dangerous to the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and the 26th Panzer Division and jeopardize the defense of the invading forces. On September 7 I was informed of the departure of the Allied invasion fleet, and since the 8th its mass had been in the Tyrrhenian Sea, that is, since that day when at noon the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief South and of Luftflotte 2, housed in Frascati were attacked by strong Allied air units

The first question was: where would the Allies land? The crossing of the invasion fleet at the height of Naples in no way allowed the binding conclusion on the area of Naples. The greater Rome area, the Campagna, offered itself; the landing force was supported by five good Italian divisions and a terrain that fulfilled all the conditions for an air landing. In the event, I intended to move out Alban Hills with the two divisions standing in the area north and south of Rome and the strong flak units, and to bring the three panzer and panzer-grenadier divisions from the Naples area up toward Rome in an accelerated manner, while the two panzer and panzer-grenadier divisions fighting against Montgomery and the 1st Fallsch.Jg.-Division with the strong anti-aircraft units located in Calabria and Puglia were to close in on the "Rome" group in accordance with the development of the situation. Luftflotte 2 was to use its strongest force to smash the massed Italian divisions in order to create the absolutely necessary freedom of movement by clearing the rear area would have

* The effectiveness of tactical landings was demonstrated by the landings of the XIII British Corps in the Adriatic. The fact that they took place on the non-decisive wing is no counter-evidence for their tactical usefulness.

created a movement situation that could have been difficult for the Allies as well, if it had not led to setbacks

In the event of a landing in the Naples area, I saw no need at all to evacuate central Italy. The situation would then be serious, but still manageable, especially if the OKW granted in time my various requests for reinforcement of German forces in southern Italy by bringing in one or two divisions from Army Group Rommel that were lying idle in northern Italy. Difficulties could arise in dealing with the Italian forces. However, I could rely on Generaloberst v. Vietinghoff, who had also succeeded in establishing a comradely relationship with the commander-in-chief of the Italian 7th Army in Calabria. I also believed that the commanders of the German troops on the islands of Sardinia and Corsica would solve their task in agreement or in combat with the much stronger Italian troops. General Lungerhausen, with his reinforced 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and strong air forces, to the north coast of Sardinia, from there, with the help of the German naval command, to be ferried past the strong Italian naval base at Maddalena to Corsica, and finally to seek to win Bastia with the German forces from Corsica, and from there to be transferred by ships and planes to the Livorno area.

All in all, the situation into which I was maneuvered with my forces was not a pretty one. I still cannot understand why Hitler preferred to write off eight first-class German divisions (six of them in the southern area, two near Rome) and an over-strong flak force instead of creating possibility of a successful operation by adding one or two divisions that were ready in northern Italy. The OKW knew from my numerous expositions what possession of the Apulian air bases meant in the fight against Germany. It could not be lightly abandoned to the enemy. But nothing happened! Even the most obvious measure of having divisions from Rommel's upper Italian area take up my forces near or north of Rome failed to materialize. Rommel's idea of abandoning all of southern and central Italy and holding only northern Italy had apparently become so entrenched in Hitler's mind that he was no longer available even for the most natural tactical requirements. But if Hitler had embraced this idea, then the German divisions had to be withdrawn from southern Italy in time with the German air force and navy units. That was the least!

When Colonel General Jodl informed me in the late afternoon hours that the Italians were leaving the alliance, long deliberations were no longer possible, nor were they necessary, since with the issuance of the keyword

"axis" all services in my area began to act according to plan. Only the situation around Rome required continuous orders. It was advantageous that I did not have to take the Italian units into consideration and did not have to reckon with Hitler's intervention, since there was no communication.

The news arriving late in the evening that the Allied invasion fleet still off Naples relieved me of two worries, - a major one since a landing on the Campagna coast was no longer to be expected, and a minor one, since a pinching off of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and 26th Panzer Division in Calabria had become improbable due to major landings on the facing points of the northern coast of Calabria. This left the Salerno Bay, which was particularly suitable for the Allies.

This meant: the approach of the two divisions from Calabria was to be further accelerated while delaying Montgomery's action; terrain and mountains supported this. Rapidly clearing the situation near Rome and feeding the forces freed there to the 10th Army in southern Italy, providing intervening divisions behind the Salerno section, whose coast was defended by parts of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division to the north and south of it, after the Italian forces had been disengaged, by parts of the 16th Panz. The mass of the 16th Panzer Division and a third of the 1st Parachute Division were behind it; the Panzer-Division "Hermann Göring" was in the Caserta area for refreshment; the refreshment now had to be completed in an accelerated manner. General Heidrich stood with the mass of the 1st Parachute in Apulia; he had to act at his own discretion.

Luftflotte 2 was deployed against the invasion fleet, while the flak standing around Rome and the German airborne ground organization were put on alert against possible air land. The abandonment of the airborne landing eased the situation at Rome, since the Italian divisions, relying on themselves alone - despite being outnumbered three to one - were not a real danger, although very unwelcome delays in the supply of reinforcements to the 10th Army could adversely affect the course of the fighting around Salerno.

It had been expected that the reckoning with the former confederate would not proceed smoothly everywhere; Naples, Bari, Rome, Corsica are examples. However, the old brotherhood of arms and the treacherous attitude of the political and military leaders. The only fiercer battles took place in Rome and Corsica. The first reports from Rome were not favorable, but they were exaggerated.

The 2nd Parachute Division entered the southern part of Rome, but was

stopped at the railroad line to avoid fighting inside Rome Incursions reported to me were stopped immediately. The parachute attack against the Italian Army headquarters at Monte Rotondo was heavier than I anticipated, but brought full tactical success; the close command staff headed by General Roatta, however, was over the hill. The 3rd Armored Grenadier Division, advancing from Lake Bolsena against the northern edge of Rome, had only negligible resistance to overcome. On September 9, a rank of one of the Italian divisions - an old fascist - informed me that the divisions would offer no further resistance and would be willing to negotiate surrenders. The Italian delegation arrived very soon. After a brief, introductory discussion with the parliamentarians, General Count Calvi di Bergolo and Colonel Count Montezemolo, my boss, General Westphal, skillfully conducted further negotiations. I demanded immediate disbandment and surrender of arms, but promised the release of all soldiers to their homes. A radio message from Field Marshal Rommel, who was apparently my superior, but of whose superiority I was unaware, demanded that all Italian soldiers be transferred to Germany as prisoners of war. I refused this and asked Hitler in a radio message that in a situation where I was fighting for the bare lives of my troops, I should be spared from giving orders that could not be carried out. I had to be able to act as I thought possible and right. I heard nothing more of it and did what my conscience dictated. Field Marshal Rommel, too, would have been better advised to discharge the soldiers of the Italian divisions lying in northern Italy than to commit his own divisions to a fruitless occupation, and to be replaced by the many fled sol-

Allied attacks against southern Italy and first German countermeasures
as of early September 1943

data to lay the foundation for the partisan units. This two-man leadership Italy (Kesseling-Rommel), with Hitler's almost servile attitude toward Rommel, that the urgent requests of the Commander-in-Chief South, for reinforcement by one or two divisions, were rejected. Unfortunately, the disarmament of the Italian units and the securing of weapons, ammunition and materiel took more time and men than I would have liked given the development of the tactical situation before Salerno. Although the reconnaissance section of the 3rd Armored Grenadier Division could be moved south as early as September 10 it was not until September 13/14 that the 2nd Marching Group of this division could enter the field. If at least a division had been assigned for Rome!

Fighting in Salerno Bay went better than I could have expected despite strong Allied air superiority, powerful naval artillery fire, and my own inferiority was favorable that already on September 11 despite a lack of fuel, the first parts of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division coming from Calabria were able to fight on the left wing, soon followed by the mass of the division and the 26th Panzer Division. On the right wing, the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and, following on its heels the ready-to-march parts of the "Hermann Göring" Panzer Division. The hole in the center was filled meagerly, by the 16th Panzer Division, in reserve until then and by a regiment of the 1st Parachute Division still in the area. The armored attack of the 16th Panzer Division, set with great expectations on 11 September in the trench-cut terrain and became a good target for Allied naval artillery. In contrast, the left wing was in successful action on September 13 or 14 under the command of the LXXVI Panzer Corps; in the late afternoon hours I was even told that it was hoped to throw the enemy into the sea that very evening. Vietinghoff and I were somewhat more skeptical, and unfortunately we were to be proved right. How easily the days, which were crisis-ridden even in English opinion - "a dramatic week" - could have led to a decisive German success if Hitler had taken into account the extremely cautious requests of the Commander-in-Chief South.

After these critical days, the situation could be considered unchanged from the initial situation; the left flank of the Salerno group was protected by rearguards of the LXXVI Panzer Corps and the natural and artificial terrain obstacles against Montgomery's very cautious approach. From Puglia there was nothing at all to fear; the force fragmentation of the British 8th Army had undoubtedly advantages for

German warfare, which in turn was not tempted to the same fragmentation. In the mountains, the weak 1st Parachute Division had blocked the paths of Montgomery's forces advancing there could be no fear of an impact from the dominating mountains in the direction of Salerno or against the 1st Parachute Division fighting on the plain.

As early as September 10, I had established on the map the various lines of resistance even if any withdrawal of German forces from southern Italy; they could generally be maintained later. The first two days gave the impression that, although much ground had to be sacrificed, it was still possible to proceed to the defenses south of Rome, perhaps in a line whose center marked by Monte Mignano (later Reinhard position) or in the Garigliano-Cassino line (later Gustav position). If they were to be held, positions had to be built, construction and fighting forces had to be supplied. The time needed for this had to be ensured by the 10th Army's combat command - Colonel General v. Vietinghoff.

I held fast to this basic idea. On September 12, the first meeting with Vietinghoff took place; discussions with the OKW concerning the provision of combat and construction resources led to a satisfactory result. During my almost daily, not always enjoyable front flights and front trips, I had my hand on the pulse of the events. With special emphasis I carried out the reconnaissance of the positions and was certainly more than a nuisance to the engineer general Bessell, who had to lead this work.

The exact knowledge of the battle situation and the state of expansion enabled me to draw up a plan for the conduct of the fight in the following months, which was generally adhered to and in which even Hitler did not interfere with a word. To escape the tiresome naval artillery fire, I authorized the breaking off of the fight on the coastal front on September 16, with the express order that the Volturno line, contemplated by AOK 10 as an intermediate line, was not to be abandoned before October 15. Naples was evacuated after supplies were removed on 1 October. Vietinghoff with his splendid chief, General Wentzell, conducted the retreat fight with the XIV Panzer Corps on the right and the LXXVI Panzer Corps on the left in exemplary fashion, dragging out the fighting around the Volturno until 16 October; the Allies did not begin to cross it until two days later. With three newly refreshed divisions (94th, 305th, and 65th Infantry Divisions) in prospect for early November I ordered the defensive readiness of the "Reinhard Position" until 1 November; on 4 November the first Allied

patrols were observed there I had full confidence in this position, which was very strong in terms of terrain, and hoped that by holding it longer, perhaps until the turn of the year, I could give the "Gustav Position" behind it a strength on which the British-American forces could cut their teeth.

Just as General Heidrich, with his more than weak parachute forces, forced the XIII British AK to follow slowly, even to stop its movements temporarily, so he knew how to lure the 78th British Division, landed at Bari September 22, 1943 by deftly dodging to the Ofanto-Adriatic cut. On September 27, after fierce fighting, the Foggia air base was lost, causing the 1st Parachute Division with the airborne formations to gradually evade behind the Front, later the Biferno. The 29th Panzer Grenadier Division rendered assistance beginning in late September, closing an awkward gap in front of the 1st Canadian Division and covering the flank of the 10th Army mass fighting west of it. One has to admire the leadership and troops of the weak elements of the 1st Parachute Division and the Luftwaffe forces deployed in Puglia. One can only agree with criticism of an English writer on the fighting of the British forces in Puglia and the adjacent mountains, who says: "What use is a sledgehammer to crack a nut?"

Apart from loss of the Apulian air bases which was difficult to bear in terms of air strategy which the OKW had refused to defend with a division from northern Italy, the situation was consolidating. The 10th Army had built up a weak front extending from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic in the most difficult of battles. The situation on the Adriatic near Termoli turned out to be less beautiful, where on 3 October the British XIII AK surprisingly landed with strong forces overtaking it and was able to form a quite substantial bridgehead. Coincidentally present at AOK 10 when the report arrived, I ordered the immediate accelerated movement of the 16th Panzer Division with instructions to throw the landed forces back into the sea; in addition to eliminating the local danger, a successful counterattack was to demonstrate that the Adriatic front was secure.

The order was given in good time. I was therefore extremely surprised when my Chief of Staff, General Westphal, reported to me on the same day between 10 and 11 p.m. new concerns arising from AOK 10, i.e. at a time when I thought the division was rushing at top speed toward Termoli. I could not share the concerns and ordered accelerated execution of my command. By the late, patchy arrival of the division on October 4 and its bungling into the fight, the AOK deprived itself of certain success. In the

face of its own severe inferiority, only forethought, far-reaching preparations, quick decisions and high mobility can bring the balance troops learned from this incident, and so did I; we demonstrated this progress in Italian leadership on the occasion of the landing at Anzio-Nettuno

I had expected a lot from the "Reinhard position", as already mentioned. It stood and fell with the holding of the narrowness of Mignano, which could not be taken as long as the height 1 ' 170 was in our own possession. The construction measures of the Corps Pioneer Battalion of the XIV Panzer Corps and my orders were directed to this end. As so often happens in warfare, sure hopes shattered. Due to local failure of the Panzer Grenadier Division fighting in this section, the enemy surprisingly gained possession of the mountain massif, which could not be won even by using the only parachute battalion at my disposal. If the battles of the 10th Army up to the "Reinhard Line" already showed the goodness and hardness of leadership and troops, the battles of the following period up to the final occupation of the "Gustav Position" proved the above-average value of the young German Italian divisions. What the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division under its outstanding commander, Lieutenant General Fries, accomplished in the karst-like mountains aforementioned central section after losing the commanding height and after relieving the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division is unique. In addition to this division, the 26th Panzer Division under its commander, Lieutenant General Smilo v. Lüttwitz, who was equal to any situation, must not be forgotten; it was the intervening division in the center until the end of November, when it was thrown into the most dangerous conflagration of this period, to the Adriatic, to intercept, together with the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and the 1st Parachute Division, the successful enemy attack against the 65th Infantry Division.

Two days before this attack (at the end of November) I was with my chief of staff, General Westphal, at the 65th Infantry Division and had General v. Ziehlberg brief me in detail on the map and in the field. It was nothing to be said against the right wing and the part of the center adjoining it - terrain-wise, fortification-wise and troop-wise it was very good; as soon as the high mountain battalions had occupied the Majella block, the right flank was also secured. The left wing increasingly had its weaknesses after the Adriatic, the position had no depth and unfavorable artillery observation possibilities; in addition, it was to be defended by a young force. On the

other hand, the battle outposts had an excellent river position with very good artillery observation from the aforementioned main position but how long would they be able to hold it? my doubts Ziehlberg remained full of confidence possible that the battle would have had a different outcome if the division commander and the commander of the left wing regiment had not dropped out badly wounded right at the beginning would have been better if the 1st Parachute Division deployed on the left (Adriatic) wing in place of the 65th Infantry Division; I considered this change; but there was not enough time to make the exchange. A number of things came together to complicate the situation; I fell out because on the decisive day I was with the Gen.Kdo. LI.Geb.-Korps in the "green position" (Apennines) and could be reached only in the evening on the Abetone Pass. Then there was a lack of large-scale reserves, since the relief of the 26th Panzer Division, which was to be made available behind the 65th Division, by the 44th ("Hoch- und Deutschmeister") Infantry Division had, contrary to expectations, been delayed, and finally the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division had arrived from Sardinia via Corsica not immediately available as an OKW reserve and was not capable of large-scale combat. As always in such cases, when the divisions finally arrived in the battle space, there were hasty deployments that did not immediately produce the hoped-for effect. The 90th Panzer Grenadier Division inauspicious start, which the new division commander (Colonel Baade) managed to make up for in a few days. In him a very rare leadership nature became visible, who, like General Heidrich, could subsequently be confronted with any task. the end of 1943, after particularly fierce fighting from December 6 to 28, 1943, calm fell on this wing

19.

CASSINO, ANZIO, NETTUNO AND ROME

AUTUMN 1943 TO EARLY SUMMER 1944

Timetable: 22.1.1944 Allied landing at Anzio-Nettuno - February 1944
Unsuccessful German counteroffensive at Anzio-Nettuno - January,
February, March 1944 Successful German defense in the battles around
Cassino - 12.5.1944 Allied major offensive on the Cassino front,
breakthrough at Garigliano and Cassino -

22.5.1944 Allied offensive from the beachhead at Anzio-Nettuno, breaking
through the left wing of the 14th Army - retreat of the 10th and 14th
German Armies -.

4.6.1944 Allied troops enter Rome, which had been declared an "open city"
by the German leadership.

The bridgehead and Cassino

The flight of the royal family and the government from Rome
created easier circumstances from a military point of view, but confusing ones
from a political point of view. It is to the credit of Ambassador Dr. Rahn and his
indispensable assistant, Consul Moellhausen, that they brought order to the
chaos within a very short time by forming a viable administration. The
drafting of the labor battalions and the provision of rations were
subsequently carried out in an orderly manner by the Italian administrative
offices, to which German forces were attached. The fact that the
implementations were satisfactory only in exceptional cases, and that the workers
remained uncertain and discontented despite the remarkably good supply - as I
myself observed in various places - was a sign of the general war
weariness. I gradually became convinced that German warfare in Italy has
been easier and more effective without the interposition of an unpopular
government.

would have been. In the end, this question was the only fundamental disagreement between the German embassy and the soldiers

I followed with keen interest the evacuation of the German troops from Sardinia and Corsica, of whose course I also personally convinced myself. Thanks to the skill of General Lungerhausen and the understanding behavior of the Italian island commander, Sardinia could be evacuated without major fighting. General v. Senger-Etterlin finally succeeded in transferring the entire force, nearly 40,000 men, with arms and equipment to Elba, Livorno and Piombino. I particularly regretted that it was precisely with the Italian occupation of Corsica under General Magli that the weapons had to be crossed, since I had come to appreciate Magli very much as an associate of Count Cavallero. The battles for Bastia and the shipments from there brought many an oppressive hour. Field Marshal v. Richthofen's pilots and Captain Engelhardt's decisiveness and skill, as well as the heroic uninterrupted efforts of most units of the German naval command deserve special mention

My constant demand, finally presented in person at the Fuehrer's headquarters to finally create a unified command in Italy without regard to myself, was met on November 21, 1943, by my assignment as "Commander-in-Chief Southwest - Army Group C." I countered the "too late" with an all the stronger will to compensate for the omissions and the resulting military disadvantages. The fortification program of the deep expansion behind the "Gustav Position" (center Monte Cassino) and the construction measures ordered by Field Marshal Rommel were now adapted to my intentions, not without me first informing myself on the spot about the terrain, the state of expansion and the possibilities of expansion

The reconnaissance and construction of positions are thankless tasks, since every soldier considers his own experiences sacrosanct and every position falls prey to the scathing criticism of his successor or even of the troops occupying the position. [†]) The fact that I was not satisfied with what I had achieved so far could not be held against me by those responsible up to that point, Generals v. Zangen and Feurstein. In order not to be subjected to the same negative criticism by the troops themselves, I charged armies, general commands and divisions designated for defense with supervision to an ever greater extent in the further course of. Unjustified was the fact that

[†] Experience in mountain warfare is not unambiguous; high-mountain principles cannot be directly transferred to low-mountain tactics. One swears by front slopes, the other by rear slopes, the third is sworn to ridge positions. There is no recipe; it is partly a matter of feeling!

the numerous fortress engineers and the "Organization Todt" under the chief construction managers Fischer and Michahellis were not recognized in their achievements by the troops despite their excellent overall work! One will not be able to change anything at such criticisms, because one cannot change the people.

The development of the long coasts required special considerations according to operational and tactical aspects and possibilities, which were finally reflected in a construction program structured according to priorities. Although I basically stuck primarily to the construction of a defensive position on the beach and immediately behind it, the second phase of work was devoted to construction measures in the deep zone. The deep zone was to be shielded from direct fire by naval artillery and to intercept breaches.

This is probably the right place to devote a few words to two points of general interest. As already mentioned, Field Marshal Rommel had specified his view on the continuation of the fight in the south to Africa should be evacuated and Italy defended in a stalling manner in order to proceed to decisive resistance in the Apennines or in the Alps. Rommel believed that in this way the African army could be saved and the southern area of the Reich defended in the Alps or perhaps in the Apennines. He was thinking in terms of land warfare. I was of a different opinion. The Africa Army not be saved as a whole at the latest with the arrival of the Allied invasion and its interaction with the British 8th Army. The possession of the northern coast of Africa already provided the prerequisite for attacks with long-range bombers against southern Germany and invasion possibilities throughout southern Europe. Conditions in the air campaign against southern Germany improved for the Allies with each step northward. Defense of the Apennines yielded no troop savings and defense of the Alps yielded only minor troop savings. In addition, it was to be feared that the supplies for an Apennine position would probably be smashed, those for an Alpine position would certainly be smashed.

The Commander-in-Chief Southwest (formerly Commander-in-Chief South) has now and then been accused in foreign writings of "invasion anxiety." One will have to admit that this was very justified with regard to the Allies dominating the sea and the air. The fact that the Commander-in-Chief Southwest secured himself - as best he could - against a possible threat to his sea flank cannot be called erroneous; not even when one realizes that the Allies left many an opportunity unused to cause serious difficulties for the German forces in Italy. I can only say that as Allied commander-in-chief I would at least have tried to shorten the battle for Italy considerably by

tactical landings in the rear of Army Group C. And this would have succeeded, even under full force. And this would have succeeded, even with full consideration of scarce Allied landing tonnage fixing of divisions on the coastal fronts had unmistakable disadvantages; the sense of security partly outweighed them; but the advantage was that new, out-of-space formations could be accustomed to the atmosphere of the theater of war and worn-out divisions could combine refreshment and securing months around the turn of the year the area around Rome from Civitavecchia to Gaeta, with a focus on the Campagnano regarded as highly endangered. My main focus, therefore, was to build up reserves so that they could be at hand on the coastal fronts to defend against large-scale landings if necessary. On a specific cue, the plan was to assemble all available mobile forces from all over Italy at the invasion points.

All the planned preparations could not conceal actual inferiority. I remember a lecture peppered with hidden accusations by one of my most capable division commanders (General Fries, 29. Panzer-Grenadier-Division) at his command post, where he described to me the untenable situation (which, however, he endured ironclad): his burned-out companies were facing two frequently relieved Allied divisions; the Allied division was almost twice as strong, the superiority in artillery and the downright fantastic ammunition equipment in the ratio 10:1 added to this. The open discussion in the presence of his commanding general relieved him noticeably. I replied to him with a smile: I would be Bavarian, but as a Prussian I would have to point out to him that the Prussians never asked how strong the enemy was, but where he was. The army group would - that was one of its essential tasks - the enemy according to strength, armament, Aus-

Airborne threats to supply routes to and through Italy and their repercussions on the defensibility of individual positions.

The division had to constantly monitor training, supply, and leadership. If the Army Group trusted the division to accomplish a very difficult task like the one at Monte Lungo - in mid-December - this would be a special tribute to the troops and leadership, but also a correct assessment of the enemy. He should only continue as before and also have some confidence in his superiors - then everything would go well. In fact, in many cases I took a special risk. Without the inner willingness to do so, one was unsuitable for commanding a theater of war like the Italian one. In addition to the purely numerical inferiority of the large army units, there Allied air superiority which was only bearable because the Allied air operations were schematic and restrained by our standards

After a brief respite at the turn of 1943/44, the final battles for the presentation of the "Gustav Line" began on January 3, ended with abandonment of Monte Trocchio (January 15, 1944) and the seizure of Monte Santa Croce (also January 15, 1944) by French troops after the removal of San Vittore (January 6, 1944). The newly assigned divisions (44th, 334th Infantry Division, 5th Mountain Division) only gradually became accustomed to the peculiarities of the Italian theater of war. The 44th In-adjacent map shows that the supply became more and more endangered as the defensive position approached the border. Even the possibility of supply via southern France did little to change this; it, too, could be blocked by Allied aircraft.

What was the situation with Switzerland? First: The advantages of its neutrality outweighed the disadvantages, if only because, if it gave up its neutrality, it had to reckon with an alliance with the Western Allies. Next: Since the commercial trains passed through Switzerland unhindered in both directions for many years, the traffic on the other two available railroads (Brenner Pass and Villach) was so relieved that the air tactics used by the Allies until the beginning of 1945 were militarily only short-term and did not cause any stagnations threatening the theater of war in Italy. However, with the air superiority and corresponding emphasis tactics of the Allies, the railroad traffic through Switzerland would have had to be additionally blocked. Not to mention political-strategic consequences resulting from the through traffic for military goods! The possible occupation of Switzerland by the Allies the course of the French invasion would have had the greatest operational disadvantages for the German Western theater of war and the German front in Italy. A glance at the map replaces long explanations. In consideration of an extension of the war to Switzerland, we had taken the

precaution of building border defense positions on the Baden-Württemberg and Italian-Swiss borders; weak security troops or observation posts had been deployed. The Italian-Swiss front was of only secondary interest. On the other hand, the danger - for geographical and operational reasons - of the great German western front because of the possibility of pushing behind the Rhine

fanteriedivision, since the replacement of "Weaner Buam" was not sufficient, never reached its full performance level, while the 334th Infantry Division, after various attempts of deployment to quiet sections of the front by its new commander, General Böhlke, matured into an elite division within a few weeksThe 5th Mountain Division hadunlearned its special usethe tundra (Finland)The new commander, General Schrank, succeeded in turning it into a first-class major combat division in a short timeMuch of the blame for the failure lay with the lack of high-altitude winter equipmentand the divergent views onconduct of high-altitude combat, which could only gradually be brought to a common denominator by me.

The fierce fighting of the past months had made it certain to methe high Allied commitment and the acceptance of the heaviest losses had to have a broader strategic objectivestrength of the operation was in too greatcontrast to the task forpurely entrenchment attacksField Marshal Alexander could not, in my opinionsatisfiedlong run with the slow, loss-ridden advance of the Allied fronthead to be expected that sooner or later this costlystruggle would be brought to an end by an overtaking landing; it could be expected only in the greater Rome area, considering the Allied methodologywas further clear that such landingswould somehow be coupled with an offensive on the southern front. Strong German motorized reserves were necessary for either eventuality. I had ordered the withdrawal of four motorized divisions and hoped to have them available in time. I madefirst two divisions available inarea around Rome, which seemed to me to be particularly endangered, since the 92nd Infantry Division to the north and the 4th Parachute Divisionthe south of Rome were only inThe following two divisions were to be made ready in the space between the right wing of the 10th Army and Rome This no longer came about!

The Allied attack against the Garigliano front (94th Infantry Division) broke out on 17-18 January with superior forces of the X British Army Corps, joined on 20 January by the II American Army Corps in an assault across the Rapido The 94th Infantry Division had been regrouped and was therefore no match for the attack; severe breaches at Castelforte could not be sealed off with the weak reserves of the 10th Army, which had to reckon with an extension of the attack across the Liri Valley to the Cassino Massif. As I myself realized, the fate of the 10th Army's right wing was hanging by a thread. In this situation, perhaps relying too much on a report from Admiral Canaris, the chief of the Abwehr, Iyielded to the pressing demands of Army High Command 10 and led it the General-Kommando XI. Fliegerkorps

under General d. Fl. Schlemm with the 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions with the order to restore the situation at the 94th Infantry Division under the greatest acceleration. Was this the right thing to do? Could this be justified, especially since I had also received a report contrary to the briefing by Canaris about the occupancy of port of Naples, according to which tonnage was available there for an invasion fleet?

The enemy's operational possibilities were clearly in front of my eyes; one was becoming more and more obvious; the attacks of II American which had begun on January 20, Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps (F.E.C.) against the positions north of Monte Cassino, which had begun on January 20, were directly connected with the fighting at Garigliano and increased their chances of success. The other possibility, namely the landing, was only to be sensed; the when and where was unsettled. If I failed the Army High Command 10, the right wing of the 10th Army could be pushed in without knowing where it could be brought to a halt again. At the time, I saw a development coming such as actually occurred in the May Offensive. If this unguided rearward movement coincided with a landing, the resulting consequences could not be overlooked. How would Rome, a city of millions, react to this? I did not believe that the attack by the American 5th Army was conducted merely to camouflage and facilitate the invasion; I believed that the Allies would not land until progressive attack in the south not only facilitated the landing but also made possible local interaction in a kind of encirclement battle. But be that as it may, I did not think I was mistaken in assuming that General Clark or Field Marshal Alexander would have taken advantage of the opportunity of the initial success at Garigliano to roll up the right wing of the 10th Army if the Allied attacking forces had not just been forced to cease their attack by the German countermeasures. To avoid this campaign-decisive blow, something already had to be done. I had to refrain from half measures for the sake of the necessary rapid success. I considered it right to clear the air at one point in order to be able to turn to a possible new danger area with sufficiently strong forces.

mystery of the impending invasion could not be unveiled, since aerial reconnaissance almost completely absent and the sparse reports were inaccurate or misleading. During the three nights preceding the invasion, I had ordered the highest alert for all of Italy. It was my mistake in yielding to the urgent ideas of my staff that the troops should not become alarm weary, and I did not order an alert for the night of 21/22 January 1944. It was also unpleasant that avoidable delays in marching occurred in the 90th Panzer

Grenadier Division, which delayed the counterattack on the Garigliano front, again postponing the bringing in of the intervening divisions into the Campagna south of Rome.

The first hours of January 22, 1944 - the day of the invasion at Anzio and Nettuno - were anxious. Already in the morning hours I had the feeling that the greatest danger had been averted. Besides the hesitant action of the landed Allied troops, the main credit for this went to General der Flak Ritter v. Pohl, who, on my immediate instructions, threw his anti-aircraft batteries around and formed a barricade south of Rome that was difficult for tanks to break through. Battalion after battalion was brought up and placed under the command of General Schlemmer with the order to lead all incoming forces as far south as possible in order to slow down or stop the enemy advance in cooperation with the flak. To me, every meter mattered. This order, as I saw on the spot in the afternoon, was modified high-handedly and incomprehensibly to the detriment of the counterattacks I was already contemplating, which prompted me to relieve General-Kommando XI. Fliegerkorps from the Garigliano front, after the order had been given there to cease the attack, and to assign it the task of building up the defenses as a starting point for the counterattack. I had certain feeling inspection of the front that from the Allies the unique favorable opportunity to take away Rome and to unhinge the Garigliano front was missed and time was our confederate.

At that time, General Schlemm earned his spurs as the leader of the army units. What happened in those days was a motley military confusion - units of the Panzer Division "Hermann Göring", 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, 26th Panzer Division, 90th Panzer Grenadier, 4th Parachute Division and guard units fought next to and among each other - but everyone knew that it was all up to him! What was accomplished by my staff from 22 to 24 January deserves the same recognition as the achievements of the rushing units. In this cooperation I gratefully saw the proof that my efforts educate leadership and troops to quick and decisive action had been willingly received. Apart from the General Command XI. Fallschirmjägerkorps, I ordered Generalkommando LXXVI Panzerkorps from the Adriatic section and AOK 14 from northern Italy to the bridgehead area in order to establish a firm command framework I was able to tell the commander in chief of the 14th Army, Generaloberst v. Mackensen, when he reported to my headquarters at Monte Soratte on January 23, 1944, that I considered the defenses consolidated, that major setbacks would no longer have to be expected. I gave him two tasks:

Consolidation of the defensive ring and initiation of measures to narrow and eliminate the bridgehead. The heavy attacks of the VI American Corps on January 25 against Cisterna and on January 31 against Cisterna and Campoleone proved the correctness of my assessment: small local enemy advances were bought at large losses. Now Mackensen, without having to fear serious crises to the troops arriving by the end of January: from the 14th Army the 65th and 362nd Infantry Divisions, from the Supreme Commander West the 715th (partly motorized), from the Supreme Commander Southeast the 4th Jäger-Division, from OKW - from Germany - : Infanterie-Lehr-Regiment, Panzer-Grenadier-Regimenter 1027 and 1028, Artillerie-Lehrregiment, Tigerabteilung etc. collect, brief and deploy.

As early as January 22, I ordered the 10th Army to pull out the 26th Panzer Division in order to get hold of new reserves and to reunite the major units in terms of war structure.

As much as concern for the beachhead prevailed in the days of the landing, the situation with the XIV Panzer Corps in the Cassino area to the northeast required equal attention. The excellent forces of the French Expeditionary Corps (F.E.C.), alongside the II American, slowly but surely fought their way toward Colle Belvedere and Terello, which fell into enemy hands on 31 January. Here only elite German divisions under proven leaders - General Heidrich and General Baade - and the equivalent Regiment 211 (Major Knuth) of the 71st Division (General Raapke) could avert the danger.

And they succeeded; on February 6 the climax of the battle passed, on February 12 a stalemate occurred, about which Field Marshal Alexander wrote: "this battle was a German success" could not be changed by the later attack (from February 15 to 19) of the 4th Indian Division and the New Zealand Division to take away the Cassino Monastery and Cassino itself, which was initiated with a lot of artillery and the quite unnecessary, even harmful for the later fighting, bombardment against the monastery. I will state here definitively that the monastery was not included in the battle line and was cordoned off by field gendarmerie against unauthorized entry. Even if the art treasures and the library had long before been taken into papal custody, the heavy losses of the civilian population depressing. We appreciated the grief of the abbot of the monastery.

At the bridgehead, both parties vied to achieve their objective. The attacks of the VI American Army Corps were aimed at breaking through to the Alban Hills; Mackensen had to take firm hold of Apulia as a starting point before launching his own main attack. The Allied attacks were repulsed with

heavy losses on both sides; the German attack led to the seizure of Apulia on February 8-9 and of Corroceto on February 9-10. Allied counterattacks fizzled out. The VI U.S. Army Corps drew the only correct conclusion from the failure of its attacks in early February and went over to the defense, developing positions deep in the beachhead. Although the 14th Army continued to keep defensive measures in mind, its main consideration was the attack. Remarkable numbers of units and supplies were supplied to the Army Group. Luftflotte 2 also did its utmost; the flak massed there was impressive, and the air operations were a swan song of former greatness.

I had become convinced that with the available means I had to succeed in throwing the Allies into the sea. I had taken into account the strong naval artillery and the superior Allied air power. I always tried to imagine the situation of the VI U.S. Army Corps and its forces psychologically stay in the bridgehead, which was also bad in health, had to be cursedly unpleasant; our strong artillery and the air forces with their numerous anti-aircraft batteries and airmen alone ensured that the Allied troops did not find any rest even "in the quiet." The bridgehead garrison was numerically

With Crown Prince Umberto and General von Rintelen at an exercise of
the Italian Folgore Parachute Division trained by General Ramcke

Monastery Monte Cassino - a picture that makes you think

limits were set. Too much cost unnecessary blood, too little meant the loss of the bridgehead; the transport of new waves had its difficulties and required time. seemed to me that the most important thing was to attack as quickly as possible, before the losses of the last few days of fighting made up and the intermediate positions in the bridgehead had become too strong. This requirement was countered by the acclimatization of the new German divisions, which were not capable of large-scale fighting, and perhaps also by the AOK's desire to make preparations particularly thorough, which was probably due to an overestimation of the enemy.

The obvious idea of leading the bridgehead position by a flank attack from the combat strip of the 4th Parachute Division was leaning against the coast north of Anzio and to unhinge the bridgehead, was rejected by Generaloberst vMackensen and I uniformly refused, since the deployment and attack would have had to under the flank fire of the entire naval artillery without being able to bring our own artillery to full effect; the cooperation of the strong German armored forces would furthermore have been severely impaired by the dense, and on top of that mined, forest terrain. Since the southern flank dropped out by itself because of the damp, intersected terrain, there remained - very roughly - only the strip between Apulia and Cisterna. I approved Mackensen's plan of conducting the main attack on both sides of Apulia and supporting it with two secondary attacks.

Hitler had Mackensen report to him on the attack plan and then, in agreement, ordered that the attack be conducted by the infantry training regiment, and very narrowly in order to ensure an all-crushing artillery effect. Both should take revenge, I can not absolve myself of complicity. Even if the infantry training regiment was presented to me as quite unique, I should not have believed this so readily and should have known that a home troop unaccustomed to combat would not be able to withstand large-scale hostilities. Another drawback was the setting of a richly late attack time for February 16, 6:30 a.m., since the terrain-unfamiliar regiment could attack only on sight. The setback was shameful. I firmly believe that the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division or the 26th Panz would have pulled off the attack. The 29th Panzer Grenadier Division proved its old fighting spirit in the attack on February 18, which launched from a difficult position without any surprise and carried forward to Road 82, the last enemy bridgehead position - initial line. The artillery support of more than 400 army and anti-aircraft guns did what was expected of them, while the tanks, abundant by our standards, and

the remote-controlled "Goliath" ‡) bogged down and failed. If otherwise the enemy divisions were at least twice as strong as the German ones, in this attack against the Allied bridgehead the superiority was on the German side. Taking full account of the many deficiencies revealed during the battle, the Allied superiority in airmen and naval forces, I must call the defensive success of the mixed American VI Corps a special achievement

This recognition is again confirmed by the failure of the second attack ordered by Hitler. I did not expect a substantially different result. A repetition of an attack, albeit in a different place. However, I could not contradict the order, since I too had to acknowledge political and military reasons that guided the OKW. The possibility of partial success, which I saw in the narrowing of the bridgehead to the "initial line," was given. This would have meant a substantial saving of forces for the 14th Army, and the Allies would have had to ask themselves whether the bridgehead could be held at all. This time the attack was to be led from the other corner of the bridgehead, from Cisterna, with three weak divisions as the first wave. Experience of the first attack was taken into account, the camouflage and deception measures were completed, without my being convinced of their absolute usefulness in such a confined space. The first date for the attack (February 25) had to be postponed because of bad weather; February 28 also brought intermittent cloudburst rain. When I visited the troops day - as always before major combat operations - I was already inwardly determined to postpone the attack again. At the request of the attacking units, I refrained from doing so; the troops had confidence. The advantages of bad weather were greater on our side than on the opposite side. If anything, local surprise was possible in this weather. Tank support failed on the opposite side, and naval artillery and aviators were inhibited to a great extent. Better weather on February 29 - the day of the attack - reduced these advantages, and the better cross-country capabilities the Allied tanks added to them. The German attack made no head, which caused me to halt it as early as the afternoon of March 1.

In the renewed enemy attack against Cassino and Monte Cassino, which began on 15 March 1944, the Allies proved inferior to the defenses despite the very heaviest bombing, massed artillery fire, and use of the best British attack divisions (78th British Division, 4th Indian Division, and New Zealand Division), which had never been experienced up to that time. The 1st Parachute Division held out; the British attack ceased on the night of 23-24 March.

‡ "Goliath," small, remote-controlled, armored explosive carriers.

Luftflotte 2, under the energetic leadership of Field Marshal v. Richthofen, had not yet fully recovered the heavy losses in the battle for Sicily when the landing at Salerno again placed high demands on the airmen. My intention of using the entire air without a break against Italian divisions near Rome in the event of an invasion south of Rome did not have to be realized; the air fleet could be used mainly against the invasion fleet in the bay of Salerno. The attacks resulted in various ship losses, but could only marginally hinder the landing. The Navy's submarines and small arms were unsuccessful.

In the later battles I felt material and strength inferiority of our airmen myself during my flights and trips. I could understand the criticism of the army units without reproaching the flying units standing at the front. The ratio of about 300 of our own planes to 4,000 to 5,000 on the enemy side permitted occasional successes, but no planned air warfare is no doubt, however, that the air fleet provided the army with commendable support in the form of aviators and exceptional support in the form of flak during the bridgehead battles. The establishment of a central air command post on the Alban Hills under General v. Pohl, ordered by Field Marshal v. Richthofen, proved its worth. The command post had a direct view of the entire battlefield far out to sea; the command, supported by the air liaison commands at the divisions, deployed close combat units in advance in accordance with the development of the battle and to chase away the rather troublesome artillery observation planes. The flak units were adequate in number and ammunition equipment for their task.

grow; it is mainly due to their effect that the Allied bombing raid had disproportionately low results. Their incorporation into the framework of the army artillery under the artillery generals Friedrich, Jahn and Kruse made their effect what Field Marshal Alexander called "formidable".

In spite of all the difficulties, the supplies worked out because the Allied air forces schematized their battle management. As an aviator, I knew that it was not possible to avoid enemy air action by evading the front lines if the terrain remained equally unfavorable. Throughout the length of Italy, the lines of communication were vulnerable. It was therefore important to organize the maintenance work, to reduce success of enemy attacks by active and passive air protection and to exploit numerous possibilities of taking into account enemy action. As unfavorable as the conditions were, there were still many possibilities for making them better. The many tunnels provided stowage and repair space, the long coastlines permitted resupply by small ships and provided untraceable unloading points. The whole thing was under

the direction of my Ober-Quartiermeister, Colonel i. G. Fähndrich, a man of the desk was unsurpassed in planning and negotiating. The railroad transport chiefs, Colonel i. G. Stange, later Lieutenant Colonel i. G. Schnez, tried to outdo each other. The repair service was supervised by General der Flieger Wenninger, with whom the naval command and the railroad pioneer commander worked, so that the most necessary things could always be brought in. This is saying a lot, because to an ever increasing extent etc. of the civilian population also had to be provided by the military services. Before the battle for Rome

Leadership and troops, some of them deployed since July 1943, the mass since September 1943, almost without a break, had achieved outstanding results, without the final result in March 1944 being satisfactory. With the heavy losses on both sides a long rest could be expected until a decisive offensive. In the provision of strong reserves lay the recipe for the successful passing of the coming battle. The operational idea of the

Garigliano: German and Allied distribution of forces on both sides of the
Gustav
position on May 11, 1944, before the Allied attack

Allies to link the southern front and the invasion was clearly evident; it had not yet been realized. New attempts in this direction, even stronger use of material, were to be expected if the Allies did not strive for a greater resounding success cheaper way by landings in the Civitavecchia or Livorno areas was to be noted that the Allied forces' front-line capabilities had increased; various divisions had grown into large combat units.

I believe that this development was due to a cardinal error of German propaganda, which could not do enough to denounce lack of enemy initiative and thus gave the impetus to a gradual change in Allied leadership principles. Previous method of well-considered planned action with briefly set goals was increasingly replaced by free leadership, which became more and more perfect in the course of the months until the end of the war I had taken very energetic steps against this propaganda at the time, but it had already worked to our disadvantage. In order to show Hitler and the OKW the limits of our operational possibilities, I had my chief present the operational and tactical problems to Hitler. They culminated in two main points: Invasions cannot stop attacking, superior land, sea, and air forces, even in a well-developed coastal position without depth, if there is impeccable cooperation; counterattacks are usually brought to a halt by heavy artillery fire. Free operations in an area dominated by enemy air power are successful only under special weather or terrain conditions.

The previous battles ended in a clear draw. The political-strategic problems remained unchanged. The economic demands, which amounted to making the theater of war essentially self-sufficient, were added.

These considerations were taken into account by the fortification measures since September 1943. This meant that the "Gustav Position" in the anticipated attack strip was expanded more strongly and deepened by new barricades, intermediate positions and conceptions reinforced with armor and concrete in such a way that even very strong enemy attacks could be absorbed in the depth zone thus created. Recognizing that individual lines of fortification hardly be held in the long run against a modern attack and that positional zones could also be lost, the long-explored C-fortification south of Rome via Avezzano to the Adriatic Sea was continuously tackled. It provided the natural link to the German confinement position at the bridgehead with its barred position running directly south of Rome. The deep extension of the forward position system into the Alban Hills and its continuation to Terracina was particularly promoted, since the success of the 10th Army in defense and movement depended on it.

Operationally, the command was given the greatest possible freedom the fortificatory measures, but this was restricted by Allied air superiority and undeniable deficiencies of the C-position. One had to accept that movement operations in enemy-dominated airspace (bright blue skies, rugged mountainous

terrain or clear plains, few but well visible roads, challenging narrows, short, bright nights) could only have chance of success under very favorable conditions[§]) The C position was still in the early stages of expansion and had the Tiber, the Aniene River, and Rome close behind it; its length also gave pause for thought sea front between the positions of the 10th and the 14th Army was so secured by technical means and flooding measures one could feel protected to the highest degree adjacent coastal strips to the north had been brought into a satisfactory state of defense in accordance with their vulnerability most urgent were the emplacements in the Apennines; their development was so unsatisfactory that many more months were needed to reach a successful state of defense.

Even if the Commander-in-Chief Southwest was insufficiently served by air reconnaissance, we had nevertheless been able to form a roughly accurate picture of the forces and to draw from it conclusions about the enemy's operational intentions that were quite close to reality. With a probability bordering on certainty the Adriatic front could be eliminated from consideration. On the other hand, the Garigliano front with its foothills beyond Cassino and the Anzio bridgehead were to be regarded as attack fronts, which could still be supplemented by mock or secondary landings north of Rome in the area of Civitavecchia and by airborne operations in the Frosinone valley. Commander-in-Chief Southwest anticipated at the first tempo a broad and deep attack by the 5th American and 8th British Armies against the right wing of the 10th Army, across the Majo-Petrella and Monte Cassino massifs, followed by a swing into the Liri Valley. The great and dangerous unknown until the fourth day of the attack remained the approach, thrust and composition of the French Expeditionary Corps. I considered the subsequent sea flank to pose little threat given its natural and fortification strength and the strength of its security crew. In the event of an air landing in the Liri Valley, an attack from the bridgehead coupled in time and place had to be expected. With regard to an attack from the bridgehead, in contrast to the view of the 14th Army, I believed in the thrust past Velletri toward Valmontone for the purpose of supporting the 5th American and 8th British Armies. This way the mass of the German forces of the 10th Army could be encircled or pushed off the retreat roads. For an independent enterprise, as would have been an eccentric attack toward Rome and eastward from it, the VI U.S. Army Corps, despite its strength, was too weak.

The combat leadership was clearly outlined with the mission "defense"; it was, as I personally convinced myself with all staffs and the divisions, correctly understood. The divisions deployed in the front had so far - on the whole - proved their worth. A

§ pity that the given balancing possibilities on the whole theaters of war not lead to a battle management adapted to the individual theaters of war. For example: strong concentration of motorized forces in the East with the ideal terrain for generous operational movements, concentration of strong-armed infantry, mountain and parachute divisions in Italy, which offered good defensive sections in all its depth.

setback in the 94th Infantry Division on the right wing, whose conduct had already failed me in the preceding battles, could be absorbed in depth. The weakness of the left-joining division lay in the difficult feeds to the front. The 71st Division, however, believed it could master the difficulties. The Liri Valley could be held if the pivots (Monte Majo on the right and Monte Cassino on the left) remained in our possession. In the Liri Valley itself, as a last rendezvous of the anti-tank defense, numerous anti-aircraft units were deployed, which had often proved themselves to the highest degree in this use. The defense of the Monte Cassino massif was the best possible hands with the 1st Parachute Division entire left wing, being uninteresting weakly manned; the divisions deployed on this wing to be exchanged for worn-out ones during the battle.

The position at the bridgehead had an almost ideal defensive capability. The army had sufficient auxiliary forces, including flak, to even

Above: Gustav position: Allied attack possibilities - May Offensive Start of the May Offensive 1944.

Below: Anzio-Nettuno: German and Allied forces at Anzio-Nettuno before 1944 - the major German reserves and their intended movement. to repel a strong enemy attack. But if the inner wings of the 14th and 10th Armies failed to cooperate, the situation of the Army Group was severely jeopardized.

The success of the expected defensive battle depended especially on the strength and dislocation of the reserves. The dislocation of the Army Group and Army Reserves (29th Armored Grenadier Division, 26th Arm, 90th and 15th Armored Grenadier Divisions) was coordinated. The existing command structure was generally maintained. Concern for central and northern Italy was assigned to Army Group "v. Zangen".

directly subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force. The cooperation with the commanding general, General der Flak Ritter v. Pohl, was as good as it could have been in the subordination relationship. Main focus of the flak operation: Lirital - Va - Imontone - Rome.

The intelligence network met even the highest requirements; General Jacoby was the right man in the right place here.

German naval command was tasked with intensifying naval resupply and improving coastal protection through artillery and naval vessels. Admiral Meendsen-Bohlken accomplished this with his usual expertise and energy.

Supplies - including stockpiling and staging in the rear area - satisfactory compared to earlier conditions.

All in all, the Commander-in-Chief Southwest could look forward to the coming events with calm, since in all areas everything humanly possible had been done to parry the expected major attack. *) Thereby I did not give in to the slightest doubt that the

*) Allied sources state more or less clearly that the Allied superiority in troops - if at all - only slight, especially after the start of the measures for the "overlord invasion of France". In order to shed light on this question, a short comparison of the large units on both sides on May 11, 1944 (start of Allied major offensive) follows

Divisions of any kind:

Ger	Allied
man	25

(without training divisions, but
incl. those in installation, etc. Div.) 10

Groups of any kind: 3 11
(incl. parachutists, etc.) thus in 26 against 36

total: associations

The days of battle would have their crises. To evade any risk seemed possible only if the strategic goal was disregarded. This could not be justified.

The great spring battle

Four unknowns kept the leadership in Italy in suspense:

When do the Allies enter the beachhead?

Where and in what strength does the F. E. C. attack?

Will the attack be supported by an air landing in the Liri Valley?

Is a new invasion taking place around Rome or north of it?

The initiation of the attack by the 5th American and 8th British Armies by artillery fire and bombing, including on the command post of the Army High Command, foreshadowed the severity of the coming fighting. As I was able to see myself on the morning of May 12, 1944, Army High Command 10 and General Command XIV, both of which were orphaned and run by proxy, were largely out of action at that time. But the first days of the attack indicated that fears of an air landing or a new invasion were unfounded; movement and employment of operational reserves had thus become less hazardous.

The first days of fighting also confirmed our assumption about the enemy's centers of attack. The battles were heavy and resulted in heavy losses; it is regrettable the Army Group did not have clarity about the composition of the 5th. The difference in strengths becomes even clearer when one considers that the German divisions (with the exception of the 44th Infantry Division) had 6 battalions (Panzer Division 4 or 5) while the Allied divisions had 9 battalions. One also takes into account German strengths, which were far below the target, one had to reckon a threefold Allied infantry superiority in the beginning. The weapons and ammunition superiority was far greater, so that one could speak of 5 to 10 times Allied firepower of the units and the whole. The comparison of the two sides' air forces is shameful for the German side; the Allies had unrestricted control of the airspace. Allied superiority becomes even more convincing when one takes into account distribution of German forces over the whole of Italy, necessary by the flank threat which weakened the fighting front by four divisions and one brigade while Allies, as a tactical front, had only to supply the respective fighting front.

U.S. Army and especially the F. E. C. could receive. While the front south from the Liri shore to Mount Cairo was falling back on the well-developed "Senger bar" in the heaviest but evenly balanced fighting, movements on the right wing of the XIV Panzer Corps had escaped the command. The 94th and 71st Divisions had fought valiantly, but they were too weak against the superior Allied forces; it soon became apparent that even the positions did not deliver what they promised. The measures ordered for this wing were carried out under a particular bad star. Quite apart from the fact that the Army Group did not receive useful documentation for a more far-reaching decision until 14 or 15 May, unexpected difficulties the approach of the 26th Panzer Division and in its deployment. The action of the F. E. C. could not be intercepted. When the 94th Infantry Division also made its reserves available in the coastal strip instead of on the Petrella massif, against my express orders, the frontal gap created on the Petrella massif could no longer be closed. The mountain-used units of the F. E. C. had a clear path. While on the right wing of the XIV Panzer Corps conditions became increasingly unfavorable, on its left wing and in the LI. Geb.-K., the 1st Parachute Division did not even think of giving up "its" Monte Cassino. In order to connection with the XIV Panzer Corps, I had to personally orders somewhat recalcitrant 1st Parachute Division to evade. 18 May an example of the disadvantage of strong personalities as subordinate commanders also due to this that a rightward echelon of the reserves of the 1st Parachute Division behind the open wing of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and a timely withdrawal of the LI. Geb.-Korps failed to materialize.

In order to maintain cohesion, the XIV Panzer Corps had to hold out in the intermediate positions longer than the tactical situation made desirable. Thus it came about that with the 305th Infantry Division, 26th Panz, and the remnants of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, 71st Infantry Division, and 94th Infantry the right wing of the "Senger bar" could not be held. Without an infusion of new forces, the fate of the 10th Army was sealed; any defensive success with the 14th Army at the bridgehead was no equivalent; further action by the U.S. 5th Army was bound to unhinge the 14th Army as well. A predicament had arisen which, despite many misgivings, prompted me on 19 May to make the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division of the 10th Army available for deployment. I could expect that on May 20, morning, the division could have arrived in a position that was particularly strong by nature and could have closed the gap. This did not result of the 14th Army's objection to the postponement of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, of which I did not hear until the evening of May 20, after returning to my command. I understood reluctance partly with one's reserve; at this stage, however, I could not appreciate the Army High Command's reasons for opposing it, especially since there was a danger that the confining position at the beachhead might be broken up by forces of the U.S. 5th Army from the south. In order to open the Army's eyes to its endangered southern

flank and let it come to the decision I considered inevitable on the basis of its own considerations, I ordered a new combat strip distribution and placed the 14th Army charge as far as the Sperlonga-Fondi-Frosinone-Valmontone line. Unfortunately, at the command post of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division on 21 May, I found that the division was outgunned in the race that had begun late and was delivering a fight questionable in its final success in unprepared terrain. An excellent defensive terrain was squandered and an almost impregnable position was opened to the enemy between Terracina and Fondi, the loss of which resulted in the 5th U.S. Army gaining contact with the VI U.S. Army Corps at the beachhead.

The overall situation had thus become more difficult, but without yet being irreparable. No attack had yet been made from the bridgehead, nor could Army High Command 14 provide reserves at the most vulnerable points of the front. Accelerated redeployments throughout its army front. The Army Group pulled out the 334th Infantry Division from the left wing of the 10th Army and placed it at the disposal of the 14th Army on 25 May and the "Hermann Göring" Panzer Division was ordered to accelerate the advance toward the bridgehead. Unfortunately, by 23 May (the beginning of the attack from the bridgehead) little of any of this had happened. AOK 14 apparently had not been able to free itself from the preconceived notion of the direction of the breakout from the bridgehead. Contrary to our calculations, the Panzer Division "Hermann Göring" arrived too late, had to resort to hasty measures, which ultimately had a detrimental effect when deployed at the front. Possible that Army High Command 14 counted too heavily on the use of Army Group reserves in its section and that, as a result, the self-help measures were not carried out. Determination and acceleration that the "poor man's" warfare required the position of the VI U.S. Army Corps in the narrow cauldron had its distinct disadvantages to be exploited. There were many unpleasant debates; they led to the change of command at Army High Command 14 because of the inability to close a gap between the 362nd Infantry Division and the "Hermann Göring" Panzer Division. The gap, which initially could have been closed by one battalion, widened by May 31, led to encirclement, and finally cleared the way to Rome. A pity that the exemplary fighting divisions on the right wing and in the center (4th Parachute Division, 65th Infantry Division, 3rd Armored Grenadier Division) had no equal partners on the left wing. Meanwhile, the 10th Army conducted its retreat fighting in an exemplary manner, provided a link-up with 14th Army, and won new laurels for troops and leadership with its masterful passage of divisions along the mountain road via Subiaco to Tivoli.

The major fighting days from May 12 to June 4, 1944, ended with the surrender of Rome without a fight.

The battles of this period were outrageously difficult; that the troops endured them with few exceptions, which unfortunately became decisive for the outcome of the

battle, is a special sign of their goodness. Nor can equal credit be denied to the leadership in general. Many frictions and mishaps could perhaps have been avoided; but we are still too close to the events to be able to gain a completely objective judgment

The Allies achieved a great success; the forces of the 14th Army were battered to the utmost. The fact that, despite the unfavorable situation on the right wing, Supreme Commander Southwest unreservedly honored the unilateral commitment to spare Rome as an "open city" at least indicates that he did not consider the situation hopeless. Irrelevant whether the commander-in-chief Southwest relied on the exact knowledge of the situation with the enemy or on a more emotional assessment of the conditions and possibilities with friend and foe

20.

DEFENSE STRUGGLES IN ITALY

SUMMER 1944 TO SPRING 1945

Timetable: 6.6.1944 Allied invasion of Normandy - 17.6.1944 Evacuation of Elba Island - June-July 1944 Retreat of Army Group C and stabilization of the new defensive fronts - 26.6.1944 Evacuation of Pisa - 12.8.1944 Surrender of Florence - 15.8.1944 Second Allied invasion of Southern France - 21.9.1944 Loss of Rimini

- 30.8.1944 Beginning of the British attacks on the Adriatic front - September 1944 Stabilization of the German front in the "Green Line" (southeast of La Spezia - Apennines)

- December 1944 British offensive in the Po Valley - 5.12.1944 abandonment of Ravenna.

June until mid-August 1944

From 1 June onward, the situation with the 14th Army had become conceivably

bad The combat strength of the divisional battle groups falling back across the Tiber and the Aniene had sunk to a minimum.

Conditions were more favorable for the 10th Army, which had fought north of the Petrella massif with its usual ferocity and had greatly delayed enemy advance. Its divisions could be said to be fighting strong. Here other disadvantages appeared: one hand, the few and air-prone roads of return delayed movements; the divisions were led so far away from Rome and from the Tiber that a rapid concentration of forces in the area west of the Tiber was difficult to achieve. The subordination of the mass of the most powerful parts of the LXXVI Panzer Corps to Army High Command 10 forced by the development of the battle south and the resulting new weakening of the 14th Army could therefore not be compensated immediately.

To avoid the battle in and around Rome was my irrevocable decision. This also meant renouncing the defense of the Tiber to the sea and of the Aniene to Tivoli. The river positions, excellent in themselves, were simply unusable by the Allies as soon as they possessed Rome and chose it as the starting point of their subsequent operation. Instead of "defending" the Tiber and Aniene positions for several days only a short stop could be expected north of Rome and on both sides of the Holy City.

As difficult and exhausting as the fighting of the past months might have been for the Allies, the taking away of Rome must have made their leadership and troops quite realize the magnitude of the success. On the other hand, I said to myself, Rome, being a major city, would perhaps have a demoralizing effect after the weeks of bloody fighting. Only a stronger-than-average and ruthless leadership could enforce a non-stop pursuit, but I did not believe in that and therefore built my decision partly on it. It was made easier for me because the enemy forces in front of the 10th Army, i.e. east of the Tiber, were conspicuously restrained. There was no doubt that the Allies could dictate the law of action and that the Army Group had to exploit all possibilities offered by terrain and enemy leadership in order to regain a self-contained front with combat-capable formations as quickly as possible. The terrain was not as unfavorable for the stalling warfare I intended it appeared at first glance on the map. Above all, the roads immediately north of Rome and in the intermediate terrain, e.g. south of Viterbo and near Civita Castellana, were disproportionately easy to block, which must have considerably hindered the movements of the enemy's motorized forces, which was the most important thing. The stalling defense had to gain time to regroup and supplement the combat divisions at the front, to let the non-combatant parts flow backward and to bring in new divisions. It depended on the delay or acceleration of the dismounting movements where resistance could be maintained longer and where it was possible to switch over to defense, and whether the rear divisions could be brought into action in a unified manner or had to be thrown into the fight bogged down by the predicament.

Major operational considerations were not necessary at this point; enemymovements that could become dangerous

Mussolini:
Guest at my
headquarters

After a meeting with Marshal Graziani as commander-in-chief of the Liguria Army Group.

Three
at Camp Wolfsberg
(Carinthia) June
1947 (photograph of
the engl.

were not to be misjudged, their own measures were inevitable. The 5th American Army had the advantage over the 8th British Army; it was the victor despite the lesser losses; it had terrain in front of it that was also suitable for motorized and armored units; it had the major roads leading north for any pursuit. In the strip of the 8th British Army, on the other hand, the terrain delayed the movements

The action of the 5th American Army on the Ligurian coastal road had greater significance, but for the time being it was secondary to carrying forward the attack from Rome in a northerly direction. The center-of-gravity strip lay clear, but it was there that we lacked forces that would first have to be pushed in from the 14th Army front, from the 10th Army, and from the rear. These considerations were met by the orders issued to both armies for stalling defense and restoration of a closed front. This meant for the 10th Army, accordance with retreat of the 14th, slower or faster disengagement with simultaneous shifting of mobile forces behind the right wing, for the surrender of mobile divisions to the 14th Army. The 14th Army, taking advantage of the bottlenecks, was to slow down the enemy's rearward push until the supply of forces permitted a more planned conduct of the battle.

The enemy's behavior roughly corresponded to the picture I had formed. An immediate push on 4 June in a broad front, with armored divisions advancing on the roads, would have placed the Army Group west of Tiber in a difficult-to-repair position that might have prompted a mass of motorized divisions from the 10th called up, the accelerated drawn them in rapid marches to the other side of and then the rear divisions set up new front south or north of Lake Trasimene. I received there the returning remnants of the 14th and 10th Armies. Initiation of this momentous operation did not seem necessary to me on the evening of June 4 and also on June 5, which I expressed simply by leaving my headquarters, albeit with the simultaneous detachment of the rear services, on Monte Soratte north of Rome. I believe that my remaining at the front contributed somewhat to the reassurance, since I was also directly with the troops in Viterbo on June 6 and 7.

The task set for the 14th Army was infinitely difficult, but just about achievable, making the most of all its possibilities; the fact that shortcomings appeared here was more understandable in this situation than in the battle for the Anzio-Nettuno bridgehead. Certain pessimism on the part of Army High Command 14 was detrimental to the task. Admittedly, the Army High Command had cause for concern because it faced the 5th American

Army with three armored divisions and nine infantry divisions, against which it had to oppose its own forces in strength of only one or two divisions. These numbers depressed the Army leadership more than was necessary; it did not sufficiently consider that the 5th U.S. Army had to develop from a bottleneck through which only fractions of these divisions could simultaneously gain forward space. Instead of indulging in burdensome, and in addition erroneous, calculations, it would have been more important to delay the enemy advance at the narrows. This was possible immediately north of Rome and was also possible further north. It was a serious tactical mistake, for example, to leave undefended the narrows at Civita Castellana, the possession of which only gave the enemy the possibility of free development with mobile forces to the north and northeast. The shift of the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division into this area, ordered by Army High Command 14 at my instigation, came late, but prevented even more serious mishaps.

Again and again the 14th Army, but especially the Army Group, was beset by the question of whether the rear divisions, which could be disposed of more safely after the beginning of the Normandy invasion, should be pushed forward to the height of Lake Bracciano, later Lake Bolsena, or built up further to the rear. The advantages of the latter solution were obvious; level of training of individual divisions virtually demanded it. If, however, the remnants of the 14th Army not the enemy advance various natural sections this meant the breakthrough, the destruction of the division groups and the break-in of the new divisions, which were not yet ready for defense even at the height of Lake Bolsena and were unaccustomed to combat, with the setbacks then to be expected for the overall situation. The cries for help from the front, which were more than justified, prompted division after division deployed again and again, according to their readiness to march most forward defensive position. Even if the economic efficiency and effectiveness were sometimes very low, this, in conjunction with the motorized divisions of the XIV Panzer Corps gradually arriving from the 10th Army, intercepted the pursuing enemy at the level of Lake Trasimeno. The danger of a unilateral or bilateral encirclement of the inner wings of the two armies or of the right wing of the 14th Army was finally eliminated.

The 10th Army had it tactically easier, although in terms of movement: more difficult. Due to the right echelon of sufficiently strong forces, the right army flank was sufficiently secured. In doing so, however, Army

High Command fell into frequently observed error of covering itself on the danger flank out of self-centered thought processes and thus believed to have done enough, while the general situation and the orders urgently demanded a shift of fighting divisions to the 14th Army. High Command overlooked the fact that it would have radically eliminated its flank threat as well. It required an unequivocal intervention by me on the spot to bring the General Command of the XIV Panzer Corps with its three divisions to the 14th Army on an accelerated basis.

The general idea for the conduct of the battle as of June 7 remained the same: take up the reserves from the rear and from the side, to close gaps and to gain firm connection of the inner wings fighting retreat of the two armies! Matter whether more or less ground was abandoned, the main thing was to overcome the momentary state of weakness, to pull out the shattered divisions and to refresh.

The Allied High Command helped to realize this operational idea. I have already pointed out importance of the "breather" occurred after the fall of Rome. The even distribution of enemy forces over the entire front, which became visible as early as June 6, reduced danger of a still life-threatening buildup of centers of gravity at the 4th and 10th Army seams.

The disadvantage of having to do somewhat more to protect the 14th Army's right wing on the Ligurian coast was more than offset by the reduction of the threat on the armies' inner wings. The conspicuous delay in the enemy advance and the subsequent restraint of the F. E. C. relieved the situation. It could actually be assumed that the Allies in full knowledge of the overall situation, would proceed to whole measures; according to our findings land and air forces under Field Marshal Alexander perfectly adequate for this purpose. Admittedly, air reconnaissance could not eliminate certain uncertainties for him. The image of the "emptiness of space" was not true. I was the road day and night knew the picture. In fact, the roads and towns were jammed deep into the rear area.

Operations in Italy after the 10th Army was pinned down in the Gustav position

In addition to the rearward movements, there were forward movements of the supply columns and the second-wave divisions, as well as sideways movements of the motorized divisions; the picture was confusing

As early as June 4, and to an ever greater extent during the later days of apparent that the fighting strength, even of the divisions of the 14th Army that had been carried along the strongest, was by no means broken. It was only possible to assess the fighting strength of the rear divisions correctly when the Allies had measured themselves against them. A certain amount of caution was therefore also necessary for the enemy if he did not want to experience unpleasant surprises. The fact that he exercised unexpectedly great restraint, however, was a gift for the army group.

The Allies by no means took advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Their air force was not used until the collapse of the last machine, focusing on sometimes helpless mass targets on the battlefield, but especially in the rear terrain. The partisan fight, if it had already been unleashed against existing international law, was not decisively supported. An air landing in the rear of the fencing front. Any tactical landing in the rear of the German front was dispensed. As conditions stood, any of these measures could already have had a highly disruptive effect.

Already at the height of Lake Bolsena, after the arrival of the XIV Panzer Corps on the left wing of the 14th Army, I took decisive influence on the rearward movements, again following the principle that only in battle could the enemy's thrust be gradually reduced. At Lake Trasime, I ordered the transition to defense, realizing that even in this zone there could be no fighting for the decision, but that time had to be gained. Perfect defenses of the Apennine front

If the OKW also frequently admonished not to give up so much ground, I was generally able to operate as I thought necessary from a precise knowledge of the situation. I did not yield to every one of the frequent requests of my commanders-in-chief; in most cases I informed myself of the views on the spot and gave orders accordingly. In other cases I gave permission to withdraw at my command post after presentation by Ia and chief and after any further consultation by telephone with the commander-in-chief concerned. I do not remember any case "lectured" by the OKW because of my "high-handed" measures - with exception of the evacuation of Sicily. When, at the end of June/beginning of July, Hitler insistently demanded that I be transferred from withdrawal to defense, I flew to the Fuehrer's headquarters in order to bring my view into line with that of the OKW. In this case I was accompanied by my Ia, Colonel i. G.

Beelitz I lectured for about an hour on development of the situation with the final demand that I be given a free hand in directing operations in Italy. Hitler replied with a counter-speech of equal length and tried to impose on me the rules of combat applicable to the East. In my then more spirited brief rebuttal I stated something like (summarized): "It is not a question here of whether my troops fight or run away; I can only assure that they will fight and die if I demand it. This is a completely different, much more decisive question, namely whether you, my Fuehrer, can allow yourself once again, after Stalingrad and Tunis, the loss of two armies. From my point of view, I must doubt this all the more, since in the conversion of my combat leadership your thoughts the way to Germany will sooner or later become free for the Allies, while I guarantee - if freedom in action remains assured to me - that I will noticeably delay the Allied action, bring it to a halt at the Apennines at the latest, and thus create combat conditions for 1945 which can be integrated into the overall framework of your leadership thoughts." Hitler did not reply anything more, even let fall, as my la remembers, some appreciative words - I had prevailed with my view. I acted after this lecture as before, without asking above, according to my responsible discretion. An example for many others: Hitler sent a radio message to the General Command of the I Parachute Corps, which was fighting north of Florence. He made the strongest criticism of the attitude of two divisions that wanted to go back. On a front-line drive, I learned that the Commanding General, General der Flieger Schlemm, then intended to use his entire reserves to shore up the situation, thereby renouncing any further influence. I interrupted my intended trip, drove to the General Command and forbade the expenditure of the last reserves, rather authorized him to act in accordance with the situation. This was reported to the OKW without even a query. It was known above that I tried to achieve the humanly possible out of my own initiative.

I looked forward with eager anticipation to the battle on the armored rolling road west of Lake Trasimeno; the divisions held out longer than I had reason to believe. Supported by bunkers, the troops deployed there (1st Parachute Division, 334th Infantry Division, and 15th Panzer Grenadier, as well as Panzer Division "Hermann Göring") again clearly proved their internal combat value. The left wing of the 10th Army continued to claim no special attention, while in the 14th Army, the intervention of XIV Panzer Corps gradually consolidated the situation and allowed "leadership from the saddle" to give way to more planned action. Even after the change of commander-in-chief (v. Mackensen-Lemelsen), the 14th Army claimed my

special attention. It could no longer be said that the 10th Army had by far the better divisions, nor could it be said in principle that the fighting of the 10th Army was favored by the terrain; even the enemy attacking forces generally held. But I could observe that at the Army High Command TO was led more deliberately, purposefully and energetically within the framework of the instructions given by me, which brought a generally more successful combat performance. Where failure occurred, as with the 20th Air Force Field Division, it was due in considerable part to leaders and subleaders unaccustomed to combat, since the personnel were intrinsically good to excellent, if not capable of large-scale combat, or to the composition of the 162nd (Turkic) Division, formed from various Turkic tribes. In the organization of the air-weapon field divisions, Goering's vanity was avenged, as he could not bring himself to make the air soldiers released from the ground organization available to the army as replacements. It is remarkable that Hitler also resigned himself to this amateurish solution despite better knowledge!

By shifting, we succeeded in forming a front that gradually became firmer. In doing so, my effort was to resist longer on the narrow fronts with favorable terrain in order to pass more quickly through less favorable and wider sections without jeopardizing the objective of the stalling battle. I had to reckon with the fact that the failure of one division might mean a plan and cause me to withdraw an entire army or the entire front. Endeavor to let this situation settle in such a way that the rearward movement into the Apennine front proceeded according to plan and demands and orders that did not always coincide with the wishes of my commanders-in-chief.

In all periods of the struggle for Italy, the army troops were excellently supported by the anti-aircraft units of General Ritter v. Pohl. The Army Group ordered the center of gravity, which could be in pure air defense in the rear terrain and along the supply roads to the national border, or in combined ground and air defense in the areas of the armies or general commands. In the focal points determined by the Army Group, the anti-aircraft artillery itself was again deployed exclusively in accordance with the focal points. This sensitive cooperation of the anti-aircraft artillery with the Army, which found its obvious expression in a remarkably rapid reaction to orders or suggestions, helped the Army extraordinarily. The flak was deployed in large numbers at every center of gravity. It was always the last combat vehicle barrier at which enemy breakthroughs failed. At decisive traffic arteries it was so massed that the movements were never stopped in a battle-decisive way. The Army command did not always

recognize these achievements; this can be explained psychologically by the fact that the flak was not subordinate to the Army command authorities.

Air support, on the other hand, was almost completely lacking during this period; even air reconnaissance was not sufficient. If, in spite of this, front-line combat reconnaissance, radio reconnaissance, and the Army Group and the armies with the most necessary documents, which still permitted any combinatorial predictions at all, one can conclude from this that the highest German command offices were sensitive to Allied habits and terrain conditions.

One exception remained: the great unknown was the latent flank threat. Since the beginning of the Normandy invasion (June 6, 1944), in the absence of stronger landing ship tonnage of the enemy in the Mediterranean area, a large-scale invasion in the depths of the Italian area was not to be expected for the time being, but tactical overtaking landings could be expected at any time. When in the middle of June preparations against the island of Elba appeared (Elba fell on June 17), in my opinion the danger seemed once again within reach. Otherwise, what was the point of taking Elba away? But when this unique opportunity was missed, I was able to put aside my worries in this regard for the time. The withdrawn refresher divisions were ready for action on the denuded coast if necessary. Signs of a major tactical landing on the Adriatic coast were not apparent, were least to be expected there. I also eliminated air landings from my considerations, since all assets suitable for this purpose were certainly now held in readiness for the Normandy invasion. Binding orders from the OKW were available for defense of the ports of Livorno and Ancona; but here, too, these orders bound me only as long as I considered the holding of the ports necessary in connection with the necessities of the overall situation. Both ports were cleared in good time. Such ad hoc orders of the OKW, given out of a certain excitement, ground themselves out in the course of events.

The buildup of centers of gravity on both sides of Lake Trasimeno by the deeply echeloned formations of the French Expeditionary Corps and the XIII British Army Corps and the fierce fighting from mid-June to early July on both sides of Lake Trasimeno were clear signs that the Allies were maintaining their thrust on Florence. Flare-ups of fierce fighting on the wings leading to the battles for Ancona and the fighting of the U.S. Army IV Corps south of the Cecina section and on the Cecina River itself could not obscure this fact. I did not anticipate a slow "eating through" the Apennines, but rather saw the enemy operational objective as either a rapid push through the Apennines via Florence or, if the Apennine front did not permit this, a shift of the main Allied attack to surround the Apennine front.

at its soft spot: the Adriatic

In this period - end of June/beginning of July- I again informed myself about the state of the development of the "Green Position" in the Apennines. I noted progress made in improving the lines of the position and their reinforcements some of which was satisfactory, while other parts, in particular the future center of gravity strips, were still far behind. For the completion of the installation time had to be gained further by the combat leadership I judged the terrain to be not unfavorable. On the right, Ligurian wing, there was no fear of a target-wide enemy attack due to the terrain; the stalling battle could therefore be conducted in any length of time even by troops unaccustomed to combat. In the strip of terrain west of the Siena-Florence road, the stalling defense was made more difficult, but rapid enemy success was not to be expected. Since I wanted to leave out Florence, the defense of the exceptionally favorable Arno position. Whether this disadvantage could be compensated by holding a bridgehead south of the Arno for a longer time questionable, but it had to be tried. The terrain between the Siena-Florence and Arezzo-Florence roads had a low mountain character; the lack of mountain divisions on the German side could not be completely compensated even by improvisation. Attack terrain for the enemy armored divisions was the Arno Valley, which, however, cut strongly in an east-west direction and flanked by heights on both sides, also had its great disadvantages. Eastward of this section, the attack had to overcome a mountainous terrain with heights of up to 1,500 meters; rapid passage through this space was unlikely. The Adriatic area was also divided into many favorable sections, so that even on the left wing the fight back to the "green position" seemed possible even with weak own troops in accordance with the overall operation.

After the general impression of the defensive capability of the Apennine positions, which I had already gained at this time, I considered, in view of the strain and the considerable losses suffered by the Allies, that an immediate continuation of a planned attack across the Apennines impossible, and that a subsequent thrust was hopeless.

My orders therefore provided for: Continuation of the stalling fight in the foothills of the Apennines with the intention of holding the Arno position longer and sparing Florence in the process. Saving of divisions by regrouping, refreshment measures and supply of new forces with the aim of immediately bringing security crews into the "Green (Apennine) Position", with the help of which its expansion was to be advanced using new manpower and material according to modern tactical points of view

The fighting on Lake Trasimeno from mid-June to mid-July 1944 fully met the tactical requirements. Less satisfactory was the right wing of the Army Group, battle front could only be consolidated by the deployment of the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division (Obergruppenführer Simon) Eastward of this, as far as the Siena-Florence road best German motorized divisions had been strung out like on a string of pearls to failure of 20th Luftwaffe Field Division and for terrain reasons - succeeded in slowing down and gradually halting the advance of the VI U.S. Army Corps in sometimes fierce fighting. On this wing, uninteresting in itself, the IV U.S. Army Corps, by tying up these valuable German forces, contributed much to the success of the heavy and difficult Allied fighting between Siena and Florence.

July 20 and the Italian theater of war

On the evening of July 20, 1944 **), Goering called my headquarters. Until then, I had known nothing about the conspiracy. An attempt by Goerdeler to approach me in 1942 had failed due to my indispensability. On the Italian fronts and with the units in the hinterland, things remained quiet. Except for a few officers, over whom I successfully hold my protective hand, the further course all units, army, navy, air force and SS were not informed. I was heartily glad about that! What was the inner attitude of the troops? I had not met any politicizing staff or troops. Italy and adjacent Austria. The events of the war were far too intense, the binding force of the oath far too awake, and Hitler as a magical personality far too omnipresent and far too little recognized in his criminal acts to allow ideas of a conspiracy to arise. That would be enough said. But I think it is historically important to trace the circumstances as they would all probability have developed in the Italian theater of war if the conspiracy had succeeded. If I may apply a glittering word, I had large parts of the "Republican" Army, the "Imperial" Navy and the "National Socialist" Air Force under me. If from nothing else, this labeling speaks of a clear lack of unity in attitude toward the state. With the partly fanatical loyalty to Hitler, the announcement: "Hitler is assassinated, everything listens to my command" would have triggered sharpest divisions, disobedience against the renegade, oath-breakers superiors and, with the utmost probability, bloody confrontations. If the Army, despite its oath in 1939, may have been in the majority hostile to

** On July 19, I was at the Fuehrer's headquarters to receive the diamonds for the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross and did not return to my headquarters until noon on July 20.

Hitler, it certainly was no longer so in 1944 as the masses. course of the years, all divisions had acquired different face through the infiltration of the youngest cohorts, who had become devout Hitler supporters in the Hitler Youth and remained so even as soldiers; they were in the majority in every troop. The expression of occasional dissatisfaction with some measures from above did not change this. Asked seriously about Hitler, they would always have sworn by Hitler and would also have staked their lives for him. Even if individual generals and individual intellectual, far-seeing or displeased soldiers were won over to Hitler's elimination, the turnaround was psychologically insufficiently prepared and for some responsible higher leaders the Allied willingness to communicate was all too uncertain. Casablanca was a memento! - In the meantime, years of suffering for our entire nation have passed and the heated arguments about the honorability of the conspirators and the uninvolved have not come to an end. Oathbreakers to and fro! I hold in far too high esteem all the men of the "overthrow", almost all of whom I knew and know personally, to entertain any doubt that they would not have acted from the noblest motives. Therefore, none of us has the right to feel better than the other; however, none of us also has the right to capitalize on this attitude and action of his for himself, since he would thereby discredit his earlier honorable action. Our Germany, which has become small and weak, we must note each other or bash each other's heads in; we have only one obligation, to try to understand each other and thus to come closer to each other, in order to master the difficult fate of our people hand in hand.

Autumn 1944

As much as the Army Group could be satisfied by the success of the stalling battle management even in the focal battle strips forward of Florence and on the Adriatic (i.e., until mid-August), it had not succeeded in sparing divisions for the fight around the Apennines. Theoretically, the divisions were set for their battle strips in the "green position"; the advantages associated with this were; they were also exploited. Preliminary to the units designated for occupation worked their way into the Apennine defense zone, improved line work and technical work on the basis of their own experience, and worked on occupation calendars, depots, and so on. In addition, entire or parts of engineer battalions, field replacement battalions, columns were almost universally located in this

zoneBut it succeeded only temporarily in a few casesfreefuture
occupdivisions in order toaccustomthemtheir future taskby housing them in
this area, whichwould have been doubly necessary for troopsunaccustomed
to mountains

I am of the opinion that, after the two invasions of northern and southern France, which determined the fate of the entire war, the transfer of troops there from my theater of war, which had now become secondary,a matter of courseThere was no mistakingthe fact that this made leadership in the south decisively more difficult; with the surrender of three divisions to the east, the deterioration of the situation on the two main battle fronts - east and west - that had occurred in the meantime, and the tensions onown southern front, it required a strong self-confidence on the part of all command poststo give the troops the mental support that was becoming increasingly necessary for perseverance This succeeded! And it is a merit! It is obvious, however, that in a critical situation the increasing number of orders to surrender divisions will throw all planning into disarray and create the impression of a certain lack of planning among the troops. But the army group and the army high command cannot absolve themselves ofmade mistakes

I still vividly remember the counter-ideas against pulling out or changing troop units, which were difficult to dispel. Here I saw my limits in the psychological field. not so difficult to recognize the right thing to do; it was far more difficult torealizeintention without depriving the army high command of its faith in the feasibility of its tasks It just so happened that a weak leadership believed it could hold a position only if it saw its supposed "minimum wishes" taken into account. If one ignored their concerns, one could almost certainly expect failure or a setback. Instead of ordering, I sought to persuade in such cases, which involved time-consuming on-the-spot checks and negotiationsSometimes the correct and necessary measures then came too late or at least later than the particular and general situation made it seem possible and desirable

It may be objected that the Army Group should have intervened by orders when it saw a mistake. That is correct in itself; in general, it was acted upon. However, if such interventions became more frequent,associated with an undesirable shift in responsibilitiesSince the Army Group would not have been able, in terms of manpower and strength, to take over the command activities of an Army High Command, it was necessary to refrain from cold-calling such a high command authorityIf one was bound to a leader for better or worseandcouldnotreplacehim by another

more suitable personality, everything had to be avoided to alienate him from his command activity; one had rather to try to win him step by step for a leadership appropriate to the situation. Even though many an erroneous decision may have been made in this way, for which I must of course bear joint responsibility, more serious disadvantages were avoided. One thing I believe I can claim for myself, however, is that I saw the provision of reserves as one of my most important leadership tasks. To describe them would be very interesting, but would go too far for the present purpose.

By and large, the apron battles in front of the Apennines made it possible to carry out the expansion program in the mountains. Undoubtedly, not all wishes had been fulfilled by the beginning of September; but the position was defensible and had reached a remarkable depth. I had another look at a large part of it in August and was satisfied with the work done. Work had progressed most between the Etruscan Apennines and the Adriatic. Here one noticed the influence of General Heidrich. I therefore looked with confidence to the attack, was sure to begin with the left wing as well. Everything depended on the fact that the divisions intended for the major battle could be shifted into the battle space in time.

We attached great importance to coordinating the views of the Commander-in-Chief West and Commander-in-Chief Southwest at the Army Group in the event of an invasion on the coast of the Gulf of Genoa, since the OKW kept postponing the instruction I had demanded for joint combat management of the inner wings of the two theaters of war. The suggested arrangement between Marshal Graziani^{††}) and the commander-in-chief of the 19th Army in southern France also came about rather late. Marshal Graziani and thus Commander-in-Chief Southwest were briefed status of the coastal fortifications and troop disposition of the 19th Army subordinate to Commander-in-Chief West without the veil being lifted on their measures in the event of a successful enemy landing. As an "invasion practitioner," I looked forward to an attack against the 19th Army with little confidence. Coastal defense measures were inadequate; the troops had no large-scale combat experience. In addition, there was enemy air superiority and the headquarters of the responsible Army Group Blaskowitz, which was too far away. But even without mutual agreement, it is clear to Army Group C that, in the event of a successful enemy attack, part of the 19th Army would be folded back onto the Western Alpine front and would have

^{††} Republican-Fascist Minister of War and OB of the Mussolini government, at the same time OB of the Army Group Liguria

to be taken up or framed there by Army Group C troops. Commander-in-Chief Southwest did not expect a strong enemy offensive against the Alpine massif as a violation of the operational idea of the southern French invasion. All the more reason to expect a safeguarding of the Allied invasion flank against threats from the Italian area, which could also be offensive.

The considerations of Commander-in-Chief Southwest were to prove correct; but since even at the beginning of the invasion the OKW - perhaps estimating the situation too favorably - gave no instructions and communications with Army Group Blaskowitz and the 19th Army had been severed, Commander-in-Chief Southwest tried by every conceivable means to establish communications with the Wing General Command and the Wing Division of the 19th Army and the 157th Mountain Division, which was scattered in the mountains. While this was possible with the Coastal Division (48th Infantry Division), which integrated into the army group of Marshal Graziani, it was only possible to establish contact with individual parts of the 157th Mountain Division by means of reconnaissance. There was no guarantee that the entire division would retreat to the Alpine ridge position, and thus no absolute securing of the Alpine ridge. In general of the frontier position - I considered decisive for the follow-on operations in the northwestern part of Upper Italy - seizure of this dominant starting position by the Allies allowed the deployment of even stronger Allied troops and a sudden invasion of the Upper Italian Plain. This meant linking up with the strong partisan units in the Turin-Milan area and "unhinging" our positions on the Ligurian Sea. This meant - seen from a wider perspective - a worsening of the fighting conditions on the Apennines could not yet be overlooked in its extent and a maneuvering out of the Po Valley, perhaps caused by this. It did not matter when this possible advance occurred. Until the beginning of winter the Alpine ridge position had to remain intact. In winter, the Alps protected themselves.

These considerations forced me first to deploy parts of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, and shortly thereafter the entire 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, in order to clear up the situation in the high Alps and to drive out the last parts of the 157th Mountain Infantry Division, which were in the most difficult position. Although the deployment of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was intended only for the short term, and it was to be replaced as quickly as possible by a high-mountain force (5th Mountain Infantry Division), the large distances involved and the difficulties encountered in relieving 5th Mountain Infantry Division and in

marching to its destination meant that the reserve was exhausted

Mentally, the Army Group had been gearing up for a redeployment of Allied forces on the Apennine fronts since early August. Since mid-August, I doubt that the British 8th Army was making preparations for the decisive, all-out attack on the Adriatic front. Even if it was not known how and when the attack would be launched, everything had to be done to complete preparations for its defense. I have already said elsewhere what had been arranged in the position building, and that the result was satisfactory. I have also explained what efforts were made to get reserves in hand, even if they melted again and again through interventions of the OKW like snow in the March sun.

Since August 8, on the Adriatic front under the Army High Command 10 General Command LXXVI Panzer Corps led by proven general of the armored forces Herr, who did the humanly possible, but also could not cope with all the difficulties. The overtired 278th Infantry Division, weakened by losses quickly consumed in the performances. The enemy's major attack, centered on the night of August 25/26, crashed into the relief and dismounted movements of the 71st Infantry Division and gave the 8th British Army a surprise success. The 26th Panzer Division, arriving very late at the LXXVI Panzer Corps, got off to a decidedly bad start, which affected the entire front. As early as night of August 30-31, the first "Green Position" had to be abandoned, which was now followed by no equivalent position depths of the Adriatic.

In order to free up new forces for the Adriatic front, regroupments from the western Alps across the coastal front on the Gulf of Genoa and across the entire width of the Apennines had been underway for some time. The long distances, enemy air superiority, and a certain persistence on the part of the staffs changing or even surrendering forces, as well as justifiable consideration for the enemy's fighting activity, delayed the shift. By the beginning of September, however, the Western Alpine and Ligurian fronts had been secured and the reinforcement of the particularly vulnerable left wing of the 14th Army still far forward of the "Green Line" north of Florence, was under way. In addition, the left wing of the 10th Army on the Adriatic had been supplied just in time with proven divisions (29th, 90th Panzer Grenadier Division) and the re-established 98th Infantry Division, which its commander, General Reinhardt, had known how to imbue with the spirit of a major combat division. With these forces I believed I could bring the movement to a halt. This belief was fulfilled; the battles of September 17, 21, and 29 brought a lull in the fighting on the Rimini front.

The attacks against the inner wings of the 14th and 10th Armies which began in early September after several weeks of lull in the fighting led to the planned evasion of the "green position." They widened and assumed large-scale combat forms in the second third of September. Fortunately, it was not until a time when the slackening of the attacks at Rimini became apparent. Whereas up to that time I regarded and permitted every evasion by the LXXVI Panzer Corps as an absolute combat necessity, in the last third of September I intervened more strongly in the command and ordered sustained resistance into bring the enemy more rapidly to a cessation of the large-scale attack. Only in this way could the Army Group obtain the freedom of action it needed to restore the situation on the front at Bologna. Despite the favor of the terrain and positions, the divisions deployed at the 14th/10th Army seam were unable to repel the attacks.

With almost striking marksmanship, the enemy succeeded in finding the soft spots at the respective 10th/14th Army seams and exploiting German weaknesses. In order to improve the command situation, the Army Group had frequently shifted the army boundaries during these weeks for terrain or tactical reasons. From mid-October on, the situation south of Bologna caused the greatest concern. Whether one section or another was lost in the Po Valley between Bologna and the Adriatic had become beside the If the front south of Bologna could not be held, all positions in the Po Valley east of Bologna were lost in themselves; in this case, in order to save at least the troops and material, they had to be abandoned early. Therefore, all powerful divisions had to be directed to this part of the Apennine front.

On October 23, from 4 a.m. to 7 p.m., the time of my serious accident, I visited Army High Command 10 and almost all the divisions of the front and examined the situation in detail. I gained the impression that the crisis was over and that the good divisions deployed side by side would bring all further attacks by the enemy to a standstill. This also occurred between October 25 and 26, 1944. My Chief of Staff often spoke of a miracle that the Apennines could be held at their northern foothills. It was not a "miracle." The fighting lasted eight weeks; four to six weeks of it were decidedly major battles in terrain that was difficult even for the attackers, despite all their aids. Weather conditions were changeable and ran the gamut of the upper Italian autumn. Fighting was very heavy in casualties, supplies were sometimes difficult and inadequate, and German resistance, with few exceptions. Where the attack encountered good German divisions, Allied efforts and blood sacrifices were out of proportion to success. From October on, the terrain gains became smaller and smaller preceding

weeks losses greater; the belief in rapid success declined, the signs of fatigue had a greater effect, and the attacking power flagged. The Allied divisions had fought superbly, they were supported by the technical weapons of the army and by the air force in a way unimaginable for us Germans. If it did not come to the expected early success of the Allies, this was due to the determined German leadership and the unique attitude of the German soldier. Mistakes were also made by the German leadership. Sins of omission became especially apparent during the preparatory period. Some troops had not lived up to the high standard of the German Italian fighter and had experienced crises could only be compensated for by alert, energetic leadership and by the devoted efforts of elite German units. That is why historians will have to call the period of the Apennine battles a glorious one for German warfare.

The Situation in Upper Italy after the Conclusion of the Apennine Battles

My hope of being able to repel decisive Allied offensive expected in the spring of 1945 entire depth of the Apennines had been dashed. But the Allies had not achieved their ambitious goal either. ^{††}) But time worked far more for the Allies than it did for us. What experiences and conclusions resulted from the past uninterrupted six-month period of fighting?

The severity of the fighting and the large-scale deployment of troops and materiel showed importance of the Italian theater of war for the Allies. It had not lost value through the landing in southern France. The forces surrendered for this purpose were replaced by foreign divisions (Brazilian, Italian). The close air support, which had temporarily weakened somewhat, must have been brought back to its former strength disproportionately quickly, judging from the missions. The operational air force had begun its attacks against southern Germany and Austria without achieving any crippling effect. Its involvement in the hot spots of ground operations in Italy meant neglecting its main air operational task. The naval forces maintained their elusive restraint. The gang fight intensified, and the organization of the gang system broadened. The Western Alps front was a "front in being" of no momentary major significance. The fighting beyond the Adriatic - in the Balkans - had no discernible connection with that in Italy.

Operationally, the Allies made remarkable progress. To be sure, the initial long-range objective was not matched by its implementation; the

^{††} General Wilson (H.-Qu. of the Allies) ordered on July 2, 1944: Advance over the Apennine to the Po, then proceed across the Po to the Venice - Padua - Verona line.

extensive or overtaking participation of the navy and air forces was conspicuously dispensed with. The narrow-area use of tanks remained the rule. But - the operations were more self-contained; the armies' missions were coordinated; the attacks were conducted at the decisive centers of gravity remarkable breadth and depth

Militarily and tactically, the old Mediterranean divisions had further perfected themselves. interaction of artillery and tanks with the infantry was complemented by the good cooperation with air reconnaissance, aerial artillery observation and close air support, which had already become historic. The numerous technical aids were at the highest stage of development; they were used with great skill. On the other hand, the initiative leadership in the lower units had not shown particular progress; the in itself excellent network of communication by radios of all kinds not compensate; it paralyzed more than it promoted customary right to be relieved after a certain period of combat - without regard to the respective local situation - had also retained to our advantage

The flat and open terrain on the Adriatic front did not bring the British divisions success they had hoped for; the better weapons effectiveness of the defenses offset the terrain advantages for the enemy^{§§})

Allied troops were in need of recuperation; their replacements required there, too certainly needed acclimatization and training. On the other hand, the Allies had to attach increased importance to limiting the rest period of the German defense forces, i.e., constantly disturbing them in their refreshment and working against stronger stockpiling of combat and operational resources. They also had to refrain from a large-scale attack with far-reaching objectives.

The situation created by the fighting on the Adriatic and near Bologna suggested that the expected major attack would be a pincer operation against the main forces of the German armies. Given the importance of the bridges over the Po and its offshore waters, the Allied air force would certainly do its utmost to destroy the means of communication. This could prove fatal to stockpiling and combat operations in the spring of 1945.

The fighting from May to November 1944 had repeatedly confirmed an earlier experience that even well-developed and deep positions are no match in the long run for a modern, combined attack on the ground and from the air. If, as at Cassino, the 1st Parachute Division could hold its position in the face of multiple strongest attacks, this was an exception; to

§§ General Leese writes: "He considered the fighting to have been as bitter as at Alamein and Cassino."

apply it as a norm to the front. The decisive factor was not the favor of the terrain but the goodness and morale of the defending force. Fears about the defensibility of the Lirite valley or the armored rolling road west of Lake Trasimeno proved unnecessary, while seemingly impregnable heights or mountain positions, such as the Petrella massif, the Apennine position north of Florence, by no means fulfilled the expectations placed in them. The battles on the Adriatic and on the Po Valley had shown that defense behind a prepared stretch of water had advantages and caused the attacker more trouble and losses than a mountain attack. Taking into account quality of the divisions, which had to be evaluated differently, the commander-in-chief saw favorable preconditions for the successful defense against the expected major attack in the development of zones in great depth.

The operations on the west and east wings of the Apennine Peninsula were difficult to reconcile given the fundamentally different conditions. The entire west wing was eccentric to the center-of-gravity wing; in its rectangular shape it presented many difficulties. Detaching the Genoa front too late could mean the destruction of the troops deployed there. The forces just sufficient for the mountains were lost in the plain with its well-developed road network. The road to the Ticino position was long. The danger was effective in the whole western part of Upper Italy, and the retreat movements were therefore doubly endangered. At the same time, the operational value of this entire western flank was very low; here, the armaments industry had a primacy that imposed shackles on the operation. Immediate evacuation was therefore out of the question. During the winter months, no threat to the western part of northern Italy could be expected either from the sea or from the western Alps. Air attacks against the industry and the communication routes, especially the bridges, could be expected. The German-Italian forces deployed in this battle area were weak; one could not accept the loss of about four divisions and therefore not leave them at a loss; they were needed, especially the German divisions (among them the excellent 5th Mountain Infantry Division) for the defense of the "Tessin" and later the "Alpen-Stellung". If these divisions fell out, the right wing of the 14th Army was also at risk. If units had to be cut from the 14th and 10th Armies to cover this flank, the front of the armies could no longer be held with such a forceful withdrawal of blood. So an operation had to be prepared which took into account multiple points of view. It had to be able to be triggered without much thought on a cue - "autumn fog". Of all the difficulties, only one remained: the choice of the right moment.

Also the eastern part of the Italian theater of war had, at least from the Isonzo on, no internal connection with the expected area of attack. The area east of Gorizia could gain importance if retreat operations of the right wing of Army Group E (Gen.

Colonel Loehr) denuded the Yugoslav space and left the operational area of Army Group C, wherever it stood and fought, free for Tito or Russian forces. In this case, it was necessary to build up a flank security, front to the east, for which the forces were lacking, if they could not be provided by Army Group E. But even if Army Group C fell back with its left wing toward Villach, voluntarily or involuntarily, a fight to both fronts might become necessary, also overtaxed Army Group C's forces. On the other hand, it was a comforting feeling to know that the flank was secured by one's own troops; this reassurance, however, had to give way to trepidation when Istria and the area east of it became major combat areas. This primarily affected the interests of Army Group E and only secondarily, but still unpleasantly enough, those of Army Group C. The latter was the only one to be affected. Army Group E lived its own life in the Balkans, fighting with the Tito gangs in the first years, until the Russian additionally appeared as a military opponent to the east. While from 1943 onwards the Commander-in-Chief Southwest ensured that Trieste with the offshore Istria and Fiume secured against sea landings, the defenses in the Yugoslav and Italian areas against an attack from the east and south been deliberately neglected. When the Russian-Yugoslav danger became apparent in the fall of 1944, at my instigation positions were reconnoitered terrain forward and backward of Ljubljana, which was not unfavorable for defense, to defend against attacks from the east and south and to secure the entrance to the Alps; their expansion was begun despite considerable gang activity.

urgent need for a clear division of command in the southern area, which permits a unified command of Army Groups C and E close to the front and a demarcation of the borders between them that took account of mutual interests. I had no objection to the transfer of the entire eastern Adriatic area to Army Group E, provided that a joint headquarters was created in the southern area, which would then be primarily responsible for keeping the two Army Groups. Without this, it had to remain with the previous border security despite the disadvantages.

command principles of Army Group C corresponded to these considerations. If necessary, the 10th and 14th Armies had to fight their way back to Po and, in the further course, to the positions in the Alps whereby, depending on the enemy situation and the terrain, it was possible to vary between defense and pure rearguard fighting.

In this battle management I believed myself to be at one with the opinion

of the OKW and Hitler, since otherwise the positions south and north of the Po, which had been built with remarkable success from the summer onward, would have served no purpose. But even this battle plan presupposed that the forces of Army Group C could be brought through the winter in good shape, that the stockpiling in the various defense zones could be carried out, and that the necessary communications could be maintained.

German divisions had proved themselves to the highest degree during the past six months in accordance with their operational capability. Tradition and campaign familiarity replaced much. The Führer and Unterführer corps needed the sustained training that the winter months were to provide. The main strain on German combat leadership, the absence of any German operational or close air support, remained. Even with the allocation of powerful flak, searchlights, and smoke agents, which could not be readily anticipated, this disadvantage could not be alleviated in the least. Air threat to rearward communications had to increase to the same extent that the space was reduced and the traffic area became susceptible to damage (e.g., Brenner Pass).

Whether the large gaps in the weapons and ammunition supply could be closed remained an open question. The increase in the supply of operating material had a level of urgency; serious interference with the troops' own lives could not be avoided if the necessary supply and combat movements were not to collapse. Distribution of the small stocks became all the more difficult as requirements for rapid movement of reserves as a prerequisite for successful holding out in the first place became.

It would have been sacrilegious recklessness to minimize the coming events in front of himself and in front of the troops. But it would also have been wrong to let oneself be guided in actions exclusively by the difficulties or fear of the worst development. The main question was: Since the Apennines had not been held, should we fall back behind the Po now, or only immediately before the beginning of the Allied major attack or should we accept the decisive battle in the present position which was more accidental than deliberate?

I rejected an immediate evasion (late fall 1944) even leaving strong rearguards. Drop movements could not have hidden for long from enemy air reconnaissance and the Allied agent service. The Allies could have pushed on

despite terrain and weather difficulties would then have been a well-prepared attack against the Po position beginning of spring. Thus, they would have received as a gift a large and difficult area of terrain which was still of the greatest importance for German warfare in every respect (purely tactical, from the point of view of air warfare and from economic considerations). This attitude also forbade the immediate start of the "Autumn Fog Movement".

I also refused to accept the decisive battle in the present positions; this decision would have put the future of the Italian theater of war on a card that no longer had any chance of winning. It was impossible to ignore the gaps and deficiencies of our human and material defenses. So what remained was a kind of "stalling warfare". I speak deliberately of a kind of "stalling battle" because the situation had to determine whether the battle should have more the character of defense or of retreat. If the army group decided on this procedure, then it was a matter of through the winter period economically as possible. The "neuralgic" point of the whole front was the position south of Bologna. Attacks, penetrations and positional improvements for the enemy elsewhere had only local significance. As favorable as the natural sections of the 10th Army were eastward of Bologna, the conditions were reversed for an attack advanced the south, the Apennines. Here a stronger setback early on could have unintended and far-reaching repercussions for the entire front, but especially for the left wing of the 10th Army. My decision to leave out Bologna under conditions even more difficult. Going back as far as the "Genghis Khan position" could be accepted without having to take far-reaching operational decisions. This position even had undeniable advantages in many directions.

What was the position of the OKW and Hitler?

Hitler's rejection of the "Autumn Fog Movement" in October not surprise me, I even expected it. I let this first start at all more as a trial balloon, in order to inform the OKW drastically about development of the situation and the possible consequences and to prepare it from long hand. An immediate start of the movement would have contradicted even my innermost conviction. I saw a main advantage for the leadership in the Italian theater of war in the fact that such a difficult operation had to be thought through and calendarized in peace and quiet which I considered a prerequisite for its successful execution. With the rejection of the October application, I by no means saw the last word spoken; to achieve approval in the event of a crisis, I trusted myself. Contrary to my critics, I am still of opinion that the six

months of fighting from Garigliano to Apennines were no battles for meters, and that I still succeeded in making Hitler inclined to my proposals and in leading the troops out of the most difficult situations without total losses! I was therefore optimistic enough to believe in the realization of this project at the decisive moment

I did not expect too much intervention by the OKW in the conduct of the battle during the winter months. There I had a good helper in Colonel General Jodl; as in this case, he had shown understanding for my battle management and was able to prepare Hitler in homeopathic doses for what once inevitable. This did not preclude to pass down sharp instructions in individual cases that contradicted my views. Ultimately, what mattered to dictators like Hitler was, "How do I tell my child?" Hitler knew that in following his general directives I went to the highest limit of stress, even to the breaking point, when I saw the necessity and the benefit. But he also knew that a halting order could not bind me slavishly if I come to a different conclusion after careful examination, usually on the spot. There were enough examples of this. Hitler, after all, had to follow at the end of the operation intended by me, when order and means had come into a gradually unsustainable ratio. regard to supplies, the OKW wanted to help the Italian theater of war; since Army Group C considerable doubts realization of these intentions view of the huge demands made on it by the main fronts in the East and West, self-help measures on a larger scale were ordered. The result remained to be seen.

The surrender of divisions ordered by the OKW during the fall and winter months:

September 1944: 71st Infantry Division, October/November 1944: 44th Infantry Division, December 1944: 356th and 710th Infantry Division, January/ February 1945: 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, March 1945: 715th (t.-mot.) Division and three paratrooper regiments in strength of one division, a total of seven divisions, was revealing of the situation on the other fronts. The assignment of two ground-based divisions and one training division could not bring balance. At this point I repeat that in principle, since the existence of the invasion, I considered the weakening of the Italian front to be correct, that I had even offered the surrender of divisions on a much larger scale than had actually been ordered. But I thought it wrong to stick to old operational orders without regard to surrenders and supplies. I told Hitler this for the last time on March 10, 1945.

The winter period 1944/45

On October 21, 1944, I had a detailed discussion with Minister Speer on measures to bring about Italy's economic self-sufficiency in order to make the supply of the Italian theater of war more independent in terms of armaments and transportation. After long futile applications to the OKW, an agreement was reached that evening.

On October 22, 1944, I again met Minister Speer at AOK 10 and discussed with him the crisis situation in his area; interestingly, as Minister Speer said, he had never before in France experienced such artillery and air raids as with the 10th Army.

On October 23, 5 a.m., after a short night's rest, I drove from one division to another, starting with the right wing. My appearance was welcomed everywhere; I was able to advise, encourage, and in individual cases help by supplying reserves. I got the impression that the crisis was over and that we could hold the northern slopes of the Apennines. Heavily harried by British air, we arrived in the late afternoon. I was on the big road from Bologna to Forlì, trying to pick up last two divisions, when my motor car, driving ahead of a column, collided with a long barrel gun coming out of a side road. I was the one who suffered, as the brainpan above the left eye was quite badly injured.

Soon word of my injury spread among the compatriots, who said that the field marshal was doing quite well, but that the tube had to be put out of service. In many detours I was brought to Ferrara, where the next morning I was handed over unconscious to the specialists who had been brought in. In the meantime, the consulting surgeons Prof. Dr. med. Bürkle de la Camp and Prof. Dr. med. Toennis. Psychologically, it may be interesting to note that Dr. Niesen, the staff physician who accompanied me energetically, told me after the injections had been consumed: "Herr Feldmarschall, I order you to keep your hands off your head," which must have made such an impression on me that I no longer put my hand to my forehead. I was terribly battered, which I expressed by my question to Frau v. Oertzen, Superior General of the Red Cross who was visiting me on the second day when she entered my room: "Frau Generaloberin, do you know what affection is?" When she gave no answer, I told her, smiling faintly, "When you look at me anyway," - a remark which then not expect from a life-

threateningly injured man

Hitler and the OKW were greatly concerned about my failure; Prof. Bürkle de la Camp had to report my state of health to the headquarters every day for many days. From Ferrara I was flown, strapped into the Storch, to Riva by my capable staff engineer Bäumler. From Riva I arrived in Merano. After a 14-day recuperation leave at home, I went to my staff for a general check-up via the Bad Ischl brain hospital on January 15, 1945. I was absent for almost three months; I had the utmost confidence in my deputy, Generaloberst v. Vietinghoff - but it is something burdensome when one lies tangibly close to one's theater of war without being able to do anything. The sympathy had something gratifying and at the same time oppressive. During my time in prison I asked Prof. Dr. Bürkle de la Camp, who was visiting me, whether it would not have been better to let me slumber over then. Honest as my friend Bürkle is, he said, "Under the present circumstances: Yes!"

How did I find my theater of war when I returned?

The expected Allied advances had had local, but no decisive successes; they had, however, eaten away at the marrow of the troops. Apart from the departure of divisions already mentioned, I noted drastic changes in personnel. On February 15, 1945, General der Panzertruppe Herr became commander-in-chief of the 10th Army. Generaloberst v. Vietinghoff Herr had asked me for this himself; he had my full confidence, although his severe head injury caused certain misgivings. In his Chief of Gen. Staff, the outstandingly capable Colonel i. G. Beelitz, who was attuned to my leadership habits, I saw a fully satisfactory complement. End of January until the middle of February 1945, despite my still strongly convalescent condition, I visited the AOKs and General Command, where I spoke to almost all division commanders I wanted to obtain impeccable documentation for further decisions before the decisive phase of the campaign. During these very detailed discussions following emer

The expected winter rest was interrupted. The Western Alps - area of the Liguria High Command - only by a few smaller enemy undertakings, which were without results. Even after the snow melted, a major attack was not expected, since the general situation in the west and south did not allow it.

The 14th Army front was described in the LI. Gebirgs-Korps as quiet; a diversionary attack ordered by AOK 14 (v. Tippleskirch) during the

Christmas days and carried out in the upper Serchio valley showed the fragility of the Allied secondary fronts. The importance of Monte Belvedere, with its height of 2,000 meters, for the possession of the positions east of it had been clearly demonstrated. The position in the strip of the XIV Panzer Corps was of the greatest importance for the possession of Bologna with its connections from south to north and northwest. In short, a frontal part deserved special attention!

past months (November/January) had made the danger point south of Lake Commacchio more evident the 10th Army area. Successful enemy advances were also taking place along the Via Emilia. If the British 8th Army succeeded in overrunning the front and weaker forces tied up the German forces deployed south of it, the retreat of the XIV Panzer Corps and I Parachute Corps was threatened. On the other hand, the northern strip of the 10th Army on Lake Commacchio in particular had its difficulties for an enemy attack; they were greatly increased by extensive flooding and mines.

The nature of the positions behind the watercourses had given a new face to the defense. Fighting in depth and from depth had been more emphasized, enemy artillery effect had been reduced; armored tactics had shifted in favor of defense.

In the area of "Generalkommando Kuebler" (LXXXXVII AK), previous band activity was a strong obstacle to training and position building. The advance of Tito forces south of Fiume required attention. With troops as well as with supplies, this part of the front was stepmotherly supplied.

In the course of time, the tasks of the navy had taken on a land war character. Admiral Löwisch gladly complied with my suggestions, established land naval units and trained them with the support of the Army.

before, the "Air Force Italy Command" had air cover at staging areas and traffic arteries in addition to protection tasks at traffic junctions and important narrows in the expected center-of-gravity defense strips. The anti-aircraft artillery deployed in the "battlespace" consistently formed the last anti-tank squadron. The interaction of the Army units with the Luftwaffe anti-aircraft units had always satisfied me; General v. Pohl regarded my wishes as orders. Italian operators had also excelled at the socked batteries. The aircraft reconnaissance service was crowded into a narrow space; the depth effect shrank with it. Air weapons were only hinted at. But individual modern enemy-superior reconnaissance planes - Arado 234 - produced useful reconnaissance results, and to a small extent lifted

the veil over the enemy rear and in the sea area near the front. Encouraging, but largely inconsequential, was the appearance of small fighter units with Italian crews on German fast fighters. frequent Allied attack flights into southern Germany and Austria were successfully countered on the way back

Maintaining the armaments industry in Upper Italy had become more important to the Commander-in-Chief Southwest that production could be used for his own theater of war. Minister Speer had, on occasion of the aforementioned discussion in the fall, dropped his objection. The demand for self-sufficiency of the theater of war raised by the Alpine region was initiated by Gauleiter Hofer; course, it could never meet the

The mood of the leadership and the troops was positive, far better than I had imagined. There was no trace of defeatism. The question of whether to continue or stop the fight was not raised in secret, since the Wehrmacht in Italy knew that their perseverance was also important. The troop strengths satisfactory, even though the level of training in the individual units was a cause for

The situation was more critical in the sector of weapons, ammunition and fuel, and the worst was the air situation, which could lead to the most unpleasant surprises.

The theater of war was prepared for the decisive battle. The defense, whether stalling or retreat, held prepared sections, positions and security garrisons; they had only to be exploited correctly and at the tactically correct time. This forbade the assumption of decisive combat south of the Po. But there was also no compelling reason for an immediate retrograde movement. The shifting of divisions to other fronts continued; the inevitable supplies could seldom be maintained. Nevertheless, for the time being it was not possible to induce Hitler to adjust the combat mission to the changed situation. However, since there was no decisive objection to my combat command, I believed that I able to act accordance with the situation at the decisive moment, as before

Unfortunately, Hitler could not bring himself to a decision on the question of unified command in the theater of war. The question was constantly examined by the OKW, the settlement in near prospect, in fact, for reasons incomprehensible to me, nothing happened. I almost had the impression that Hitler feared the concentration of strong power in one hand in the distant theater of war and therefore did not want it.

Surprisingly - in high snow - the attack of the remarkably good 10th American Mountain Division against the left wing of the "ground-based" 232nd Infantry Division broke out in mid-February 1945, quickly leading to the loss of the commanding heights of Monte Belvedere. This indicated a thrust could become dangerous immediately as well as for the major spring operations. Here, what had long been envisaged, something had to be done. Since the 114th Infantry Division was at hand, it was deployed in the left, vulnerable quarter of the section of the 232nd Infantry Division. That this not a permanent solution given the 114th Infantry Division's combat unreliability. Before the 334th Infantry Division could take over its task, the second attack of the 10th American Division began in early March with similarly large terrain gains. Here was the exceptional case that, in order to prevent the worst from happening, a decisive battle had to be fought for possession of the gateway to the Po Valley at the point south of Bologna, which was operationally and tactically the most dangerous for Army Group C. This meant deploying the infantry units that had been in action for weeks in the Po Valley. This meant deploying the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, which had been in refresher training for weeks. It was a hard but unfortunately unavoidable decision. Even though the enemy attack could be stopped after brief fierce fighting, it meant for the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division an almost three-week deployment with heavy losses; as a command reserve it had lost value. It was relieved by the 334th Infantry Division. From the attacks of the 10th American Mountain Division approach, direction, and center of gravity of the western pincer of the spring assault.

On March 9, 1945, I was ordered to Hitler, who placed me in command of the theater of war in the west as of March 10. Once again - at the end of April - I entered into closer contact with Army Group C, when I was again put in charge of the theater of war in Italy at the same time as other fronts. Balance of the campaign in Italy

A reconsideration of the Italian campaign at a distance of several years from the events must answer the question whether the two-year holding of the far-flanked Italian area was militarily justifiable and whether the principles of combat applied corresponded to the situation and brought the highest possible military success.

In the following considerations, I shall refrain from any political considerations; elsewhere I have already mentioned Italy's untimely entry into the war was neither demanded nor desired, but that Germany had the greatest interest in Italy's neutrality. The political-military situation was a fact with which one had to come to terms. Any excessive expansion of the war theater had its undeniable disadvantages; they lay above all in the overtaxing of the war potential, in supply and command difficulties. The endeavor of all belligerents at all times was to carry the war into enemy territory and to spare the homeland. In accordance with the enlargement of the states and the increase of the population, but especially by the technical progress, railroad and motor led to the extension of the war to the continents. The mastery of air put down the last barriers and made the global space a theater of war. If one refrains from the demands of total war in political and economic terms, limited only to the military field, the judgment results from the answer to the question whether the early abandonment of all or part of Italy would have represented a better military solution.

Evacuation of the whole of Italy and the conduct of the Reich's defense in the Alpine positions would have meant no saving of potential forces, full freedom of movement of Allied troops in the direction of France and the Balkans, renunciation of the useful, indeed indispensable, depth of the battle space, and unrestricted air warfare with heavy and light aircraft against the whole southern German-Austrian area.

Evacuation of southern and central Italy while holding the Apennines and the Alps would not have resulted in any saving of forces, personnel or material, in any substantial reduction of the danger of sea and air landings, and in the conduct of an effective air war against the southern German-Austrian habitat.

In addition, in both cases there was the increased risk to supplies.

If one wanted to realize the withdrawal operations with a certain chance of success, the preparations for this had to be made long in advance, i.e. still in the years 1942/43. At that time, this was already not possible for political reasons.

From these only briefly sketched facts it follows that the fight for Italy was not only justifiable, but even imperative; unless, disregarding the overall war planning, one merely considered it right to do what seemed to be good for one's own war theater, in this case for Italy. If one saw the goal solely in an early termination of the war at all without regard to the military-

political possibilities for success still existed, then one had to regard the Mediterranean war as unnecessary. I cannot share this view.

The bare result of the two-year battle for Italy was that, with great losses, the theater of war finally collapsed for various reasons. This in itself would not have been a pity; a general war situation had been favorably influenced by it. This might be true, because the negative result was countered by positives.

The theater of war tied up Allied forces that, deployed on decision-making fronts, could have strongly influenced war events in the East or West. Germany's disadvantage.

The theater of war, set far apart from the other fronts, prevented any direct impact on the decisive German fronts and the devastating effect of air attacks against Germany, the precondition for which would have been created only by the concentric air attacks flown from close to the border.

Allied losses were not likely to have been significantly inferior to German losses until April 1945; they were a strong prelude to decisive Allied combat operations.

German southern region was spared the damage associated with the war in all areas of human life almost to the end, which was of hardly overestimable importance for the war armament and perseverance.

As a result of the tenacious German resistance in the depths of the Italian area, the annihilation battles near the border took place only at a time when Germany's fate had already been sealed by events on the other fronts.

In this theater of war, space had its fateful significance on the ground, for air operations, and on the water. Large losses of terrain could have had an indirect or direct effect on other fronts and at home in bloody and material losses would probably have exceeded those in the Italian theater of war.

After the Normandy invasion, the Italian theater of war had become a distinctly secondary theater of war; among other things, this was expressed in the withdrawal of ten divisions. On the enemy side, on the other hand, forces of a somewhat different composition and quality were tied up and the strongest material resources were committed. The fact that the Italian theater of war could be held under the described conditions with absolute enemy air supremacy might be called by objective research a "supreme Austrian success", since the free operation had become utopian and the space once given up could not be regained. Perhaps the overall success would have more eye-opening if the fighting in April 1945 could have been carried out in the free play of forces without obstructive binding by the top

leadership

21. THE GANG WAR IN ITALY

Previous story

Italy, as mentioned, entered the war against Germany's will. German army, navy and air forces were requested to assist. They came and fought for Italy's vital interests. The German blood toll in Africa, Tunis, Sicily and southern Italy was a tremendous one. The Italian Wehrmacht units, far superior in numbers, fought nearly as hard almost without exception; in some cases they kept a conspicuous In terms of Italian friendship, this was endured.

It changed when Italy, with the full support of the Allies, proclaimed the "gang war" with the defection from the Axis. illegal under international law, both in its origins and in its execution, and turned the previous brotherhood in arms into the most brutal murder of the former ally
Development of the gang system

Under the Badoglio government (July 25 to September 8, 1943), the first signs of the establishment of resistance cells against the German Wehrmacht became noticeable. Colonel Count Montezemolo must be considered the spiritual inspirer. Since the Count was Badoglio's aide-de-camp, it can be assumed that this movement was launched at a time when Italy wanted to continue fighting alongside Germany, in full agreement with the Italian government against its ally

After the drop, the network of agents and sabotage became denser.

The escaped Allied prisoners of war found extensive help. Together with the Italian soldiers who had gone to the mountains, they formed the first groups of gangs; bad elements mingled with them, making them a particular nuisance to the decent Italian population. Isolated gangs, mostly composed of escaped prisoners of war, the back of the 10th Army in the fall and winter of 1943; they not constitute a danger In general, they struggled to cross the front. Disruptively "gang groups" made themselves felt for the first time in April 1944 in and on both sides of the Apennines, centered in

the Florence area requiring military countermeasures because of the decisive impact on supplies

With the abandonment of Rome (June 1944), an aggravation occurred I had not expected to this extent One can call this moment the birth of the "unrestrained gang warfare" in Italy. The influx of gangs, which were especially noticeable between the front and the Apennines, was striking; at that time, one can estimate the swelling of gang strength from a few thousand to 100,000. This expansion was triggered by Badoglio's and Field Marshal Alexander's call for guerrilla warfare and the destruction of the German armies in Italy to be expected in the field From this time on, "gang warfare" was a real danger for German warfare, elimination of which had become decisive for the campaign

During the winter of 1944/45, due to the unsuccessful, but loss-laden battles for the gangs, favored by armistice agreements, truce, amnesty and by the bad winter weather a substantial calming down occurred The number of gangs probably dropped to few tens of thousands That this was a "sham truce" clear to the German leadership

An increased resurgence of the gangs occurred with the onset of snowmelt in the mountains. It reached its peak strength in March/April 1945 with 200 to 300,000 men

Locally separated and of higher fighting quality, even more ruthless and brutal in their fighting methods were the Balkan-influenced gangs in Istria, in northeastern Lombardy centered around Gorizia, and in the Alpine region to the north. aim of the gang fights, apart from the general aim of disturbing the troops, was to disrupt, impede or prevent the supply via Villach to the Italian area and the traffic from the west and north to Yugoslavia

In the mountains east of the Fiume-Trieste-Görz line, the mass of the population was "banded"; in the plain west of it, conditions increasingly similar to those in Italy in the central area

The bands were generally considered to be stationary; however, shifts in the band associations were observed according to the development of the earth's position In the course of the months, it was also possible to observe focal aggregations in important zones.

Organization of the gang

The characteristic feature of the gang leadership in the early months was

the absence of higher, middle, even lower responsible leadership positions according to Article 1, line 1 of the Hague Land Warfare Regulations. Later it became better; one knew the names of some leaders.

For the German leadership, following became increasingly apparent the months

highest responsible command of the gangs was at Allied headquarters; in this we assumed that this was a mixed command post, based on Italians and Allies, with the Ic officer in charge but increasingly tied to the Ia detachment and its orders. The sabotage and reconnaissance parties were in direct communication with their principal; to all appearances, they were directly subordinate to headquarters or its intermediaries. The gang leaders were in communication with headquarters through Allied liaison officers insofar as they did not act independently. latter category included groups composed of criminal elements

The organization of units, so-called "brigades", was already noticeable in April 1944; however, these were more names than content. From the fall of 1944, one can speak of a tighter organization and leadership in zones occupied by bands (e.g., Alessandria area)

was reported to me - I could not ascertain it myself because of my use elsewhere - that the operations of the last quarter of the war were accompanied by planned partisan movements

In the case of the gang groups, which were interspersed with many ex-soldiers, leadership within a "unit" was based on military principles; however, their reach and depth of influence were small. Supplies came initially from voluntary, but mostly from "involuntary" donations from the surrounding population. It was supplemented - in terms of personnel - by parachute drops or coastal landings (submarines).

The downward organization revealed the following picture:

1. Group: The "reconnaissance squads" were expertly pre-trained and appeared in tiny groups that conspired with each other. They were high-quality partisans who risked everything. Apart from their trade in violation of international law, they were not objectionable. This group also included the sabotage squads, which, in addition to their trade in violation of international law, also violated the laws of humanity to an ever greater extent. Criminal elements were strongly represented here.

2. Group: It consisted of riffraff with appropriate leadership, who robbed, murdered and plundered wherever and whatever they could; they were "the country plague for everyone."

3. Group: An organization that, in the course of the months, became

military, which saw in the Germans and the fascists their enemies and, depending on the attitude and processing of the inhabitants of the area, found more or less adherence. Here one could find gang-occupied places, even zones, where everyone - regardless of whether man, woman or child - was somehow connected to the gangs, be it as a fighter, helper or follower. It did not matter whether these people joined in out of their own impulse or under gentle pressure. This did not differ in the case of the bullet that hit the German soldier; it therefore had to be acted upon militarily, not emotionally.

In addition, there were entire zones that were only "gang-prone" or even "gang-free"

Seen as a whole, the gang groups presented the picture of a mixture of soldiers from the Allies, Italy, the Balkans, German deserters, male and female elements of the population from the most diverse professions and age groups with the most diverse moral attitudes, without any inner, common, ethical bond, whereby the patriotic task and enthusiasm was often only the cover for the lowest instinctive actions. It was not until the fall of 1944 that one could speak of military-like units, which were mainly various mountainous regions

The composition, dislocation, equipment and armament of the gangs could not guarantee military conduct in accordance with international law. Gang warfare

They were contrary to international law in everything and anything; they contradicted the principles of a militarily decent struggle. This was characterized by the following:

Lack of leaders and leader deficiencies bear the main blame; unified direction and training were impossible as a result.

The individuality could let off steam, the southern temperament did its part. Where the exaggeratedly constructed "patriotic task" still allowed inhibitions to exist, the criminal instincts criminals knew how assert themselves to a large extent in such a group. This way, the despicable, underhanded warfare could celebrate orgies, for which the structure of the Italian area virtually in small groups or individually, the gangs raged without restraint; they carried out their shady activities everywhere, in the mountains as well as in the Po plain, in the woods as well as on the streets and at night or in the fog - but never openly. These groups can

be attributed mainly to many acts of sabotage of Wehrmacht installations, warehouses, railroads, roads, bridges, communications installations, and the equally frequent crimes of cruelty against humanity: the scale of crimes from insidious shooting, hanging, drowning, burning, freezing to death, crucifixion, torture of every kind, assassinations against individuals and communities to well poisoning, there is none that has not occurred once or many times, even continuously. The recurring abuse of the "Red Cross" must be particularly emphasized here.

This was facilitated by the fact that the gang members almost universally wore no insignia and concealed their weapons, or even used German or fascist uniforms in violation of international law. The obligatory nature of the "uniform" was missing.

All this also caused considerable unrest on the German side, since the German soldier in the "gang-occupied" zones had to suspect a fanatical assassin in every civilian of both sexes and could be shot from every house. In addition, the scouting and alarm service was carried out with the cooperation or acquiescence of the entire population, which made the constant endangerment of the German soldier possible in the first place.

Only in very rare exceptional cases gangs engage in open combat; once they had accomplished their treacherous task from ambush or had to break off the fight due to a feeling of inferiority they disappeared as citizens among the citizens or as harmless "rangers" in the countryside.

Where they did fight or had to fight, they gave no consideration for the population living in the combat area, contrary to all humane principles, so that even among the non-combatant old men, women and children the most pitiful losses often resulted.

The German losses, as well as those of the fascist militia and the uninvolved population, were considerable. Exact figures could not be determined for the German soldiers scattered over a wide area in the main months from June to August 1944, since the so-called "missing in action" included. My Ic division reported about 5,000 dead and 25,000 to 30,000 wounded and displaced for this period. These figures seem to me to be too high. According to my calculations, which are based on the casualty reports given to me verbally, one must assume 5,000 dead, probably even 7,000 to 8,000 dead and abducted, as the lower limit figure for these three months, to which the same number of wounded would have to be added in the maximum case. In any case, the loss rate on the German side alone is considerably higher than that of the total band losses.

Gang Fighting

The Axis and Allied Western powers had signed the Hague Land Warfare Code (HLKO)

Italy was to be regarded as "occupied territory" at the beginning of the war, and the conditions of Article 42 of the Hague Regulations on Land Warfare were fulfilled. It was therefore clear that the gangs were illegal under international law from the moment they came into existence. The conditions for Article 2 of the Hague Regulations to take effect were met.

war order were not given.

The gang warfare was conducted by the enemy in full disregard of the provisions of Article 1 of the Hague Land Warfare Regulations.

On the basis of these facts, the German leadership was entitled to all countermeasures permissible under the Hague Regulations or the "customs of war"

On the basis of war-historical findings and personal insights into gang warfare, I regarded gang warfare as a degeneration of warfare. The imponderables of this method of fighting were bound to come into the written and unwritten provisions of international law sooner or later. Yes, one could predict almost with mathematical certainty the gradual brutalization of war, which, increasing more and more, had to lead to the most heinous crimes on both sides. The peculiarity of gang warfare, which makes even the countermeasures slip away from the tight leadership

Fully aware of these conditions, the German Wehrmacht rejected gang warfare in all its parts; the only exception, which can be seen in the call of the "Werwolf" in April 1945, is anything but a convincing counter-argument. It was a matter for the top SS and party leadership. The German Wehrmacht had neither training nor regulations for gang warfare during peacetime. Therefore, there was also no inner readiness among the German leadership in Italy to fight the gangs which were gradually becoming a danger. It took sharp intervention by me to force the commanders-in-chief to devote some interest and attention to this fight to the front-line fight

Until May 1944, gang warfare outside the area of operations was a reserve of the Reichsführer der SS; in officially declared "gang areas," the latter ruled without restriction.

I held the view that the fight against the regular enemy forces and the gangs was an indivisible whole. My view, which was strongly opposed by the Reichsführer der SS, prevailed with the OKW and led to the transfer of overall responsibility for the gang war in the Italian theater of war to the Commander-in-Chief Southwest in early May 1944. The "Highest SS and Police Leader" was personally subordinated to me in this respect; he had to carry out the gang warfare in his area according to my guidelines, but on his own responsibility. The arrangement had a slight political aftertaste and was therefore not satisfactory from a military; however, it was possible to work with it, since a useful working organ was created in the "Gang Leadership Staff" at the "Highest SS and Police Leader"

In the "operational areas" of the armies and along the militarily occupied coast, gang warfare was in the hands of the army high commands.

borders between the band areas of the armies and the "Highest SS and Police Leader" adapted themselves to the earth situation and the forces available at the responsible offices each case

"reconnaissance into the gangs" was largely controlled by the Army Group, the Army High Commands (Ic) and the "Highest SS and Police Leader"; the implementation was incumbent on the Security Service Agencies (SD), with which the aforementioned command authorities were "instructed to cooperate" In the same way, the cooperation of the SD offices with the "Secret Field Police" of the Army was regulated.

With full respect to the marked responsibility, the leadership in a gang warfare enterprise had in principle the oldest officer, regardless of affiliation Wehrmacht, SS or police. For the rest, following regulation gradually came into effect

rear areas - or coastal strips - of the deployed divisions and corps, division commanders and commanding officers were responsible within their strips, subdividing the sections according to troop occupancy. In the rear army area "Korück der Armeen" (commanders in the rear area) led as ground-level

The organization, if only because it avoided any schematism, was appropriate and good

For large-scale guerrilla enterprises commanded by the army group, closed large units or mixed units with independent leadership provided the decisive factor was not absolute strength, but the suitability of the troops for guerrilla warfare

While initially it was possible to make do with infantry units, the expansion and intensification of gang warfare demanded the use of artillery, grenade and mine launchers, combat vehicles, flame throwers and other technical means of combat ever greater scale

Well-trained and well-equipped, fighting-quality men were locally grouped and drilled into "Jagdkommandos," which had to be available at any time for immediate countermeasures. Special formations, e.g. "Bataillon Brandenburg", were added. The closed large (divisions) kept so-called "raid commandos" ready

Thus an organization had been established over the entire rear area which was efficient and which intended to some extent for the defense of

enemy airborne operations and served as a substructure defense of the rear area in accordance with suitable terrain objects (narrow, entrances to towns) or fortifications against a front-line enemy who had broken through the front

In the rear formations, the soldiers, from the leader to the rifle bearer, were no longer fit for campaign use. Lack of physical or mental abilities could only be compensated by higher character qualities. This was counteracted by stage life with its corrosive influences. In the area of the "Highest SS and Police Leader", special difficulties arose due to the diversity of the troops (Germans and Italians from all parts of the Wehrmacht and party branches, Russians, Cossacks, Czechoslovakians, partly in very small units) and due to the lack of experience in the pure combat area. All these difficulties, however, never shook the organizational edifice to the point of endangering lives or called into question the execution of the task.

The German regulation "Bandenkampf", published in 1942 on the basis of the experiences in the East, never became common knowledge of the troops, because it appeared at a time when band fighting was of no importance in my area. When it entered its decisive stage, front-line fighting made such great physical and psychological demands on the leadership and the troops that the study of this matter, which was necessary in itself, was not possible.

The battle was taken too lightly by the higher command, which is understandable since the gang effect was usually far back in space and the fighting troops did not feel directly affected. Reports from the rear of attacks on detached or rearward elements came so late that, with the frontal load increasing daily, the reaction would otherwise expected did not occur.

The inner reluctance of the leadership and the troops, the lack of experience in this field and, above all, the knowledge of the inevitable excesses of gang warfare prompted me to order all possible measures to prevent or limit irregular warfare in its emergence and expansion. These measures were to include:

Police surveillance of the nuclei and later of the illegal organizations themselves. Political pacification with the participation of almost all Italian church leaders, including the Vatican, political leaders, administrative heads and other influential personalities, through education, welfare measures for the population, pardon decrees, exemption from military and

labor service, from transfer to Germany and assistance against gangs, worldwide radio recaddition, there were attempts to negotiate at least a local and temporary cessation of hostilities which actually succeeded in several cases

Clearly realizing the crucial danger of the gangs to the withdrawal battles of my armies since June 1944, I have tried to close the existing gaps by verbal instructions and written orders. The main points of my orders were:

In tactical terms, "gang warfare" was to be treated in the same way as "front-line warfare. means of combat (combat vehicles, artillery, flamethrowers) had hitherto been reserved exclusively for "front-line combat" to be used wherever they could be used to eliminate the gang threat quickly and thoroughly, and the best troops were just good enough to be used in gang combat.

aim was to ensure that, through energetic and rapid action and the deployment of disciplined troops, the gang warfare did not degenerate into uncontrolled, high-handed action by poorly led and poorly disciplined detachments of troops, which I regarded as a precursor to chaos

Gang warfare had its own face, to which the tactical rules had to adapt. Combat reconnaissance on the battlefield had to be preceded by early and continuous "reconnaissance into the enemy". troops were not suited for this; special forces of the SD and the Secret Field Police had to take their place. Success was achieved only in enterprises that began abruptly and with the utmost secrecy. The removal of the gang camps was of practical use only when the gangs defended the camp. rule gradually became to seal off gang areas completely and either to reduce the encirclement by simultaneous action of all fronts or to advance against the fixed cordon line with focal attack troops

Under the aforementioned paralyzing feeling of insecurity and defenselessness, a counter-defense adapted to ambush fighting developed. One no longer waited until one was shot at from a house, but held down the possible ambushers by firing at the house or one shot until the enemy was unable to fight, in order not to see him appear in the rear as an unexpected enemy. When fighting over long distances, securing the rear connections for supplies and transporting the wounded had become especially important if one wanted to avoid major losses

In view of the brutal, even inhuman behavior of the gangs, I had to order

the sharpest use of weapons for a critical period in order to avoid the extraordinary losses arose from a certain carelessness and misplaced leniency on the part of the soldiers fight against the gangs, if one did not want to act in a suicidal way required a mental change, which also contained great dangers. These dangers could only be avoided by using a well-disciplined troop under a tight leadership.

I refrained on principle from using bomber forces, which in themselves would have been the most effective means, because in the fight against gangs in localities the civilian casualties incurred in the process could not be justified. Events have taught me that this consideration is little thanked. If gang warfare is not outlawed with all the consequences and binding on all parties under international law, this principle will probably have to be dropped in the future.

Given the nature of rebel or guerrilla warfare, international law permits measures that are alien to front-line combatants. Unfortunately, the provisions in the HLKO are specified only in the very smallest part, partly they are based on the "custom of war". These are the following areas: hostage question, the killing of hostages; reprisals, their nature, scope and proportionality; collective measures and their preconditions; emergency decrees and court proceedings.

It must be understood that unclear and incomplete provisions of international law in the wildest and most passionate events must regrettably lead to inevitable blunders and fatal casualties on both sides. It is a sin against the spirit of various existing views and interpretations of international law (e.g. continental versus Anglo-Saxon view) on an interpretation which the responsible leader cannot apply in the event of an act on the country-specific provisions. Many of the above-mentioned acts (reprisals, etc.) are purely "matters of discretion" which must be decided by the responsible leader on a case-by-case basis on the basis of a thorough examination of the overall circumstances.

Since, according to German regulations, only commanders, from the division commander upward, who had all the relevant case officers, were authorized to impose reprisals sufficient safeguards against unreasonable measures.

It is certain, however, that you don't get anywhere with regulations and criticism from the green table soldier whose life is being threatened in the vilest way and who only sees "red" reacts differently than a fiddling

prosecutor or judge behind his well-secured desk

Scope of the gang fight; assaults

daily reports that converged at the Ic of the Army Group from the entire war zone, were kept in the situation map and mappedrevealed the constant increase in combat operations and special incidents The shifts in emphasis also provided indications for operational situation assessment. The number of individual operations varied between ten and fifty daily during the main combat periods and their preparation times.

While the sabotage of objects important to the war effort, railroads or camps was more or less location-bound and - tousea sailor's expression-routine, i.e. subject to only minor fluctuations in numbers, all other gang actions were influenced to the greatest extent by the location of the earthThus, the spaces and the frequency of the raidschangedconstantly

line with the expansion of the gang organization, the "gang-endangered" or "gang-occupied" areas became more and more prevalentHowever, they onlyendangered livesthey were directlymilitary operations

The behavior of the gangs was an endless chain of law-breaking and violations of international law, as I have already stated.

the course of the post-war years, German soldiers have been accused of assaults in large numbers; various incidents have also been subject of trials, almost all of ended with the accused sentenced to death. These judgments cannot be the last word on this chapter!

Even taking into account all the exaggerations and fantasies inherent in Italian national character, as well as the pressure still exerted today by the former, mostly communist gangs, one will have to admit that unlawful and despicable acts have also occurred on German soil. On the other hand, convincing proof of the guilt of German soldiers has only been produced in few exceptional cases. The excesses or atrocities that have occurred are likely to be evenly distributed among the gangs, the neo-fascist organizations and German deserter groups, while only the smallest fraction, if any, may be attributed to German units. Perhaps some incidents can also be attributed to displaced persons who had exceeded the permitted level of self-help.

It gives one pause for thought that only a very few irregularities in this respect—perhaps three or five cases—were reported to the Commander-in-Chief Southwest through the German official channels, and that the offenses against the population reported by Mussolini to the Commander-in-Chief Southwest at my insistence turned out to be untrue or exaggerated on the basis of German verification. This is also an underlying procedural disagreement, which again goes back to different interpretations of provisions of international law (e.g., application, scope, and procedural mode of reprisals). Frequently, testimonies stand against testimonies, so that one can only find the German soldier guilty if one accepts the sworn testimonies of the witnesses brought by the German side as untrustworthy, and the crudest testimony of the other side as basically credible.

One could object to this line of argument that such incriminating incidents were not reported but presented in a more harmless way or even suppressed. Since anything is possible in wartime, such individual cases may indeed have occurred. I must contradict a generalization, since I built up a reporting and monitoring network precisely with this in mind which would not have permitted such a practice in the long run. This included cross-connections between Italian offices and German troops and staffs, liaison commands with the Duce, feeder services from the Church, and finally my frequent sudden visits to German and Italian troops, command posts and authorities, organization of the field police with

field gendarmerie, secret field police, patrol service and the "Feldjäger-Korps", which was in charge of all Germans in the theater of war.

I believe that nowhere and never has so much been done to maintain the discipline of one's own troops and to safeguard against gangsterism with international law. In addition, I have taken draconian action in my area of command when immorality and decomposition have begun to alarm the effect on Germany's clout and prestige, as well as on friendship with the Axis partner and, above all, on the welfare of the population. By such measures I have been able to reverse obvious decay of the discipline of the 14th Army within the shortest possible time.

However, if during a war or after a war the insurgents are officially recognized as patriots and heroes even by governments of those countries that have signed the HLKO, this means a complete disregard of treaties and abrogation of any idea of law. If jurists in such trials can say that the gang struggle finds two contrasting assessments, depending on whether it is judged by the countries of the gangs or their opponents, this view cannot be justified from a legal point of view, since international law, as the superior law, must give the sole basis for the assessment.

Such processes and views are pernicious for the preservation of a healthy legal morality to the greatest extent. One cannot want to give the world a new right if one deals arbitrarily with the old valid right.

III. PART

UNCONDITIONAL HANDOVER AND PROCESS

22.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WEST

Timetable: 23.2.1945 American major offensive on the Roer - loss of the left bank of the Rhine - 7.3.1945 Americans take the undestroyed Rhine bridge at Remagen - 10.3.1945 Kesselring Ob West - March 1945 American bridgehead formed at Remagen - 22.3.1945 Rhine crossing by Americans at Oppenheim - 23.3.1945 British-American major offensive on the Lower Rhine, Rhine crossing at Wesel - 28. and 29.3.1945 Fall of

Mannheim, Wiesbaden and Frankfurt a. M. - 1. to 18.4.1945 Enclosure and
surrender of Army Group B in the Ruhr Cauldron - 4.4.1945 Fall of Kassel
- 11.4.1945 Fall of Würzburg - 16. to 20.4.1945 Fighting around
Nuremberg - 18.4.1945 Fall of Magdeburg

The order

On March 8, 1945, I received orders to report to Hitler. The reason was not given to me on my inquiry.

The next day, around noon, I arrived at the Führer's headquarters (Berlin). I was informed by Field Marshal Keitel, in the presence of Colonel General Jodl, that I was to relieve Field Marshal v. Rundstedt in the West. My comment that I was needed in the Italian theater of war and that, as a convalescent, I would not have the necessary mobility for the decisive task in the West was understood, but it was felt that it would certainly not be valid for Hitler.

The conversation with Adolf Hitler in the afternoon - initially in private - confirmed the view of Keitel and Jodl. After a detailed introduction to the overall situation, Hitler explained to me that the fall of Remagen had finally necessitated a change in the supreme command of the theater of war. Without reproaching Rundstedt, he justified the measure saying that only a younger, more agile leader, experienced in combat with the Western powers and possessing the confidence of the front, could perhaps still master the situation in the West. He was aware of the difficulties of taking command this time in the war; however, I had to make this sacrifice in spite of my failing health. He had confidence in me that I would do everything humanly possible.

Hitler then described the overall situation to me. I will only give a brief outline of what he said:

The decision lies in the East; the collapse in the East inevitably means the end of the war. The East was heavily armed; he looked forward with confidence to the decisive battles. He expected the enemy's main attack to be directed at Berlin.

Army Group Center (Schoerner) - in Czechoslovakia and Silesia - had performed excellently and successfully in the previous battles. Reinforced, with sufficient supplies, it would beat off the attacks directed against it.

On the left, the army "Busse" (AOK 9), against which he expected the main attack and which was therefore best equipped with personnel, material and fortifications.

For Army Group South (Rendulic), to the right of Army Group Center, what had been said for Army Group Center applied; while the left wing of the Army Group might still be included in the main decision, he expected only secondary attacks on the right wing.

The front of the 9th Army (Busse) was equipped; there were: Sufficient infantry forces with tanks and anti-tank forces; in addition to the Heeresartillery, an over-strong anti-aircraft artillery in great depth under the best artillery command; good positions with excellent obstacles of every kind, especially water obstacles in front of and behind the main battle line, plus Berlin with its perimeter defense and facilities for sectional defense.

This front would not be penetrated by the Russians; he had convinced himself of the defensive capability and had had detailed, fully satisfactory discussions with the leading artillerymen.

However, the forces of Army Group Heintz, which adjoined the 9th Army on the left, would still have to be reinforced; he expected only secondary attacks here.

Army Group Southeast (Loehr) had only secondary importance; its previous

combat leadership ensured the further successful stalling defense in connection with Army Group Southwest (v. Vietinghoff), which hopefully could maintain my tradition, just as Courland and Norway did not worry him

The West had been fighting hard for months, but the battles had also been costly for the Americans, the British and the French. The West would be supplied with the necessary supplies on a going basis and now that the reinforcement of the eastern front had been completed. Even if it could not make closed formations available, there was certainly still time now to carry out the refreshment of the worn-out formations of the Western Front with the personnel and material supplies rolling in. The natural obstacles behind which the armies stood could not be ignored by the Allies. Remagen was the sore point, the clean-up was urgent; however, he was confident here as well.

At the present stage of the war, the sole purpose is to bridge the time until the 12th Army, the new fighters, and other new types of weapons can be deployed in large numbers.

The Air Force (aviation) would have to be blamed for a large part of the failures so far; he had now taken the technical management into his own hands and guaranteed success.

Grossadmiral Dönitz, Commander-in-Chief Navy, would soon make his presence felt with his new submarines and bring substantial relief

The homeland had endured and achieved supernatural things. The entire armament was in the hands of Saur (from the Ministry of Armaments), in whom he had complete confidence and who would certainly fulfill the vital demands of the troops. However, part of the production would have to be diverted to new formations, which would represent the best that the German Wehrmacht had produced in the war. He guaranteed first-class leadership: therefore, once again, fight to gain time!

These remarks by Hitler, which stretched on for hours remarkably clear and showed a striking knowledge of details.

Subsequently, Field Marshal Keitel and Colonel General Jodl gave more detailed explanations on various questions. These remarks enlivened the picture, but did not bring any substantial changes

The order was clear: "Hold!" It burdened me all the more because I was required to lead "anonymously" for the time being, since my name was still to have an effect in Italy

The situation and the first measures

In the night of 6/7 March 1945, I drove to "Headquarters Supreme

Commander West" in Ziegenberg, where the Chief of the General Staff, General of Cavalry Westphal, my former boss in Italy, informed me in detail about the situation as he saw it

I will only mention a few essential points:

The situation on the Western Front would be characterized by the enemy's extraordinary superiority in manpower and materiel on the ground and complete domination of the airspace

About 85 American, British and French divisions in full strength would be facing about 55 weak German formations without sufficient personnel and material supplies. daily strength of our infantry divisions would have dropped to an average of 5,000 men, compared with a target strength of 12,000. The daily strength of the few armored divisions on the other hand, would still be between 10,000 and 110,000 men; all in all this would mean that at best there would be 100 fighters for every kilometer of front could be no talk of a deep zone, of the withdrawal of even small reserves, or of the occupation of the numerous bunkers of the West Wall. In appreciation of the development of the situation in the east, the Commander-in-Chief West would have made 10 armored divisions, 6 almost full infantry divisions 10 artillery corps, 8 launcher brigades, and numerous other troops to the eastern front in January and February. Compensation would have been promised, but so far there would have been no sign of it. As far as the spirit of the German troops was concerned, according to reports and personal observations it still generally good. The troops were tired of war, worried about their families, but still doing their duty. It would be aware of the serious task of watching the back of the Eastern Army. My Chief of the General Staff believed he had to say that every soldier in the West knew that he had to contribute to protecting German soil and

German people in the East from the grasp of the Russians. This and the knowledge of the "unconditional surrender" would be the bonds that still held the front together.

lectures of the Chief of Staff, the Chief Quartermaster, and the Chiefs of Intelligence and Railroad Transportation occupied me very much; I expressed my impressions very clearly in an evening talk with the OKW: Seen from close quarters, the situation looked much more serious than it had been described to me at headquarters. My requests would therefore have to be met to the greatest possible extent.

With General der Flieger Schmidt - Luftwaffe Command West - I spoke very thoroughly on March 10 in the afternoon about the air situation. The short summary of the lecture was:

Command West is not subordinate to Commander-in-Chief West; cooperation good. The air divisions and flak corps cooperate smoothly with the army groups. The Army Flak units and the Luftgau Flak divisions are included in the command framework of the Flak corps while the Luftgau are subordinate to Luftwaffe Command West.

Army and air defense interests of the homeland intersect at times; the "Luftflotte Reich" under the imaginative leadership of Colonel General Stumpff, of course, cannot always do justice to Army interests. The abundance of tasks is in inverse proportion to the available combat resources. In addition, the Allied air superiority, the deficiencies and gaps in the ground organization of the airmen, the technical and aeronautical difficulties of the new airplanes (spotlights), fluctuations of the spring weather in the Rhine plain, difficult to predict, the lack of fuel and spare parts on the aeronautical side, and on the anti-aircraft side the insufficient mobility of the batteries and the operation not pre-trained for a mobile use and also otherwise not very suitable. Although ground combat is something alien to air defense, it was increasingly called upon for such tasks. Only the above-average commanding generals of the Flak, General Bogatsch, General Fickert, are to be thanked for the fact that the army requirements could be fulfilled.

In conclusion, I urged General Schmidt on two points: on the consistent formation of centers of gravity, as it must be brought about at the moment in the Remagen area, and on a now unavoidable intensification of all efforts of the Air Force and the Navy, with its

The aim was to destroy the Remagen Bridge and any temporary bridges.

On March 11, 1945, in the morning, I was with Army Group B (Field Marshal Model), where I was briefed by the Commander-in-Chief of the 15th Army, General d. Inf. v. Zangen and the Commanding Generals in the presence of Model at the LIII AK command post

Parts of two American infantry divisions and one armored division with artillery were assumed to be on the right bank of the Rhine, which could not yet be countered by equally strong defenses; points of weakness and danger would be above all the wing fronts in front of the bridgehead. Ammunition supplies also inadequate; this was all the more serious since, after the loss of the observation posts, the observed fire possible up to now could not be compensated by disruptive fire with massing against the bridge. Elimination of the enemy bridgehead was considered promising only if personnel and material supplies were accelerated and reinforced

Since the conditions behind the front also pleased me very little, I had to regard the situation as a whole as worrying.

In the late afternoon of the same day I was with Army Group H on the Lower Rhine, where its commander-in-chief (Colonel General Blaskowitz) lectured me at the command post of the Parachute Army (General d. Fl. Schlemm)

The result of the lecture was: The Army Group would face the coming events with confidence if there were at least eight to ten days left for refreshment, setup, resupply, combat instruction and rest. The Army Group should and wanted to defend the Rhine, i.e. fight for it.

In Holland, AOK 25 (General d. Inf. Blumentritt) led with weak but for this purpose sufficient forces, of which the most powerful parts were correctly deployed on the left wing. On the left of it, as far as the Ruhr, led the paratrooper AOK Schlemm, whose most powerful parts would have to carry the full load in the expected main combat strip. The Army divisions deployed between the Lippe and Ruhr would be weaker but equal to their task, which unfortunately turned out to be an overly optimistic view. Strong forces stood in reserve.

Everything I heard made a well-considered impression on me, so that, remembering the unique combat achievements of the Parachute Army west of the Rhine, I believed I could look forward with confidence to the expected fighting on the right wing of the front

It was not until 13 March that local debates could take place in the Rhenish Palatinate at Army Group G with 7th Army on the right and 1st Army on the left. With the 1st Army I also heard division commanders called from the front.

Both armies considered the situation dangerous, but not hopeless if mobile reserves were brought in. AOK 1 expected attacks on the right wing. Expansion of rear lines of resistance would have begun, but needed more manpower and materiel to perfect, and above all still time. In my opinion, the concerns about the bunker defenses were exaggerated, as later fighting proved. As I pointed out at the time, the bunkers also had their undeniable advantages for fighting from the depths. I was subject to two misconceptions at the time, first that the use of rear services in the bunkers located to impaired mobility of the troops to an unexpectedly high degree, and then that the internal resistance of the rear units was quite low after all. But - the West Wall was a fact and by virtue of its very existence had to cause a repulsive effect or more cautious attack.

AOK 7 was building up the Moselle defenses and was engaged in fierce, back-and-forth fighting with its left wing. In the center-of-gravity strip was the only full-strength 159th Infantry Division, reinforced with heavy weapons and sappers but it had no major combat experience. Rear positions were being developed.

On March 13 at night I had gained a superficial personal impression of the situation. Unfortunately, with the prevailing time pressure, the overlong front and the immobility imposed on me by my injury no opportunity to inform myself at the front with front-line troop units. This is regrettable, since I could have immediately formed a more convincing picture of the situation and the condition of the troops and perhaps come to a different conclusion.

The situation presented itself to me as follows:

Strong enemy force concentration in the Remagen area and in front of the 1st Army on both sides of Saarbrücken

Signs of a stronger enemy center of gravity formation by the 3rd American Army, in front of the right wing of the 7th Army, and, in the making, in front of the Parachute Army.

Ongoing and apparently intensifying attacks on the right wing of the 1st Army south of Trier.

Pronounced neglect by the enemy of Dutch front (25th Army), the Rhine strip forward of the Ruhr (5th Panzer Army), and the Upper Rhine front (19th

The grouping of forces of the Allies made it easy to see hostile intentions

Taking advantage of the fortuitous success at Remagen, either to split the German western front in two while shielding it against the flanks, to establish contact with the Russians by the shortest route and thus finally separate northern and southern Germany, or - which was less likely - to limit the advance to the east and attack the Ruhr area from the south and southeast.

Comprehensive attack on the only remaining West Rhine bastion (Saar-

Pfalz) to destroy Army Group G and thereby secure the Rhine crossing as a base of operations against southern Germany

Attack by the British to force the Rhine crossing on the Parachute Army and form a bridgehead with the operational possibilities then available in three directions

The attack to expand the Remagen bridgehead was continuously nourished; however, the enemy did not yet have the decisive high ground firmly in his hands.

Attacks against Army Group G, especially against the 1st Army, were under way; the conditions of the 7th Army had not yet been fully clarified; in front of both armies, however, enemy attack sections were merging

In contrast, the expected attack against Army Group H hung behind in time, but as a part of the whole it could not be separated from the ongoing operations.

The enemy forces were superior in manpower and materiel. The Allied air force dominated the area

After the hardest, most costly battles, the friendly forces had been forced back into the river positions and into the still intact parts of the West Wall, and only a small part of them had been grouped and refreshed for the new combat phase. The necessary reserves of middle and higher leadership had not yet been formed or were not yet in the tactically correct places.

Remagen demanded more and more forces. As a center of gravity, it swallowed up the replacements and supplies fed to the Commander-in-Chief West almost single-handedly and magnetically attracted everything from the right and left. This made regrouping, rest, and refreshment difficult, if not questionable, for other army groups. This was the greatest danger, which could already be overlooked.

Countermeasures against the first enemy forces that had crossed the Rhine had not been initiated with the concessionless severity that alone could have guaranteed a rapid, safe and relatively easy clearing

With the clearing, or at least with the holding of the Remagen bridgehead without too much expansion, the Rhine front stood and fell.

The Rhine Palatinate bridgehead offered itself to an all-out enemy attack, which had to be reckoned with in a short time. But after all, the Moselle with its favorable rear terrain was a noteworthy obstacle, the Westwall with its apron and depth in the 1st Army's strip could not be easily overrun, the sectional terrain of the Western Palatinate offered the attacker extraordinary difficulties and the Army Group all the possibilities of a mobile defense, especially if these sections could still be reinforced. Everything depended on getting the necessary reinforcements and reserves in place in time; the present lack of any large

motorized reserves was a cause for concern I saw no way to remedy this deficiency immediately; Army Group G could be helped along by the 19th Army alone. If the attack came very quickly, alarming crises could not be avoided. Time had become the determining factor.

Army Group H in its positions behind the Lower Rhine still needed time to regroup and refresh. Since the British troops were badly battered by the hard fighting west of the Rhine, I assumed it was still available.

military districts in the West showed a great deal of understanding for the situation, willingly integrated themselves into the overall plan and provided support on their own initiative, especially Military District V (Stuttgart), Military District XII (Wiesbaden), Military District XIII (Nuremberg

The Luftwaffe had considerable anti-aircraft forces at its disposal. The heavy losses had so far been partly compensated by makeshift motorization of fixed anti-aircraft forces. Much more could be done here. Indeed, more had to be done, since they were almost the only long-range caliber that could gain significant importance, especially behind the Rhine obstacle and in flank positions, e.g., at the corners of the Pfalz bastion and in the flanks of the Remagen bridgehead. The more favorable ammunition equipment compared to the army artillery demanded this; the flak could become the backbone of the front. The use in depth as a Pak replacement had to be increasingly envisaged.

already weak air defense was thus deliberately weakened even more. But it was no longer capable of effective air defense; enemy air attacks had also shifted their focus from the cities and industrial centers to the army's combat and movement zones. When weighing the pros and cons, priority had to be given to the front and the supply lines.

The pilots tried hard, but even with the sharpest summary they did not achieve a respectable success. Lack of fuel, enemy attacks on the airfields, the unfavorable weather weakened them. Perhaps some improvements could still be made to give close combat aviation its old agility and some of its proverbial aura among friends and foes; or - should the time have passed for this?

The supply situation was poor, and in some areas it was in crisis. In addition, there was the uncertainty of the arrival of the supply trains, misallocations were unavoidable, and crises at the front were inevitable.

The rail network was badly damaged and could no longer be taken into account as a safe factor in the event of the failure of further sections of the line. Remarkably little had been done and prepared in this area; it was at least doubtful whether a radical improvement would be possible. However, an improvement in the organization had to be tackled.

All in all: a very tense situation that could experience decisive twists and

turns in the coming days and weeks, which was doubly easy. Rhine position had not been reconnoitered and expanded in time and as a precaution

In addition, signs of decay had become visible behind the fronts, which gave pause for thought. Number of "defectors" allowed worrying conclusions to be drawn about the will to fight.

The current internal attitude of the civilian population of some Gaue, especially the Rhine Palatinate and the Saar region, supported these signs of disintegration. Mutual accusations widened the gap. Even in high military staffs, political conversations could be heard that undermined the united will to resist; they inaudibly propagated downward.

The overall situation forced cool consideration of measures for the near future.

Was the continuation of resistance on the Rhine and in the Saar Palatinate still justifiable?

My order was succinctly, "Hold!"

After almost three quarters of a year of fighting in retreat with its inevitable consequences, Hitler not expect the decision to there either; he ordered the capture of the present front, which, according to the terrain, seemed to him to provide a balance against the weaknesses known to him as well, in order to gain time until the events in the east matured and the new deployments and weapons became effective. In the case of the Saar Palatinate, war-economic considerations were still a factor: After the loss of Silesia, the Ruhr and the Saar region had become decisive factors. The conduct of the war in general. Partial losses were also difficult to bear; compensation had to be made by additional efforts. Part of the remaining territories, which in turn had to have increased security. It also had to be taken into account that with the enemy approaching the Rhine, not only the raw materials industry in the Saar region but also the important Rhenish armaments industry (e.g. Ludwigshafen) would come to a standstill.

The "fight for time" would have been conceivable, of course, also in the stalling fight in the depth of the German area, but it was tantamount to abandonment of these armament areas. That was therefore out of the question for the time being. What were the conditions in detail?

Holding the Rhine position was dependent on Remagen. bridgehead expanded at the same rate and to the same extent as before, its disruption could stop in the long. If breaches were made in the German bar in front of the bridgehead, the enemy would use his mobile forces to break through and, regardless of the direction in which he advanced, would unhinge the Rhine defenses at least between the Ruhr and the Lahn, possibly as far as the Main.

Everything humanly possible to be done prevent bridgehead from being broken up. Despite the immense difficulties, I thought that at least one delay still achievable.

In some respects, conditions in the Rhenish Palatinate were less favorable. Above all: Army Group B was itself convinced of the necessity of its task; at Army Group G, on the other hand, the opinion seemed to me to be divided as to what had to be done. The general tendency toyed - openly or secretly - with the idea of clearing the Saar Palatinate. Decisive for the course of operations was the timing of the enemy attack, one can calmly say the "pincer attack." If there was still time, the shifting of divisions and reinforcements behind the 7th Army and on the right wing of the 1st Army could be. This would bring about a shoring up of the front that should not be underestimated force the enemy to fight hard. Could the tempo of the evasion, if it became necessary determined by us through this would the American": French troops arrive at the Rhine in a condition which imperiously demanded a stop and created favorable conditions for the fight for the Rhine.

If the attack was unexpectedly rapid, then there was no longer any question of planned retreat movements. I could not, like Army Group G, see in movement under such conditions the panacea. For that the Army Group had too few, indeed almost no, motorized forces, enemy aviation dominated the airspace, and the still existing disorder behind the front burdened every movement narrow and obstacle-strewn terrain. The result, already visible to me now, would then be that the enemy would reach the Rhine with the least losses and immediately initiate the transition, while our troops, insofar as they would return at all be badly battered by earth and air forces.

I took the view that, from a purely military point of view, the German bridgehead Saar-Palatinate was of no decisive importance for the campaign. Higher points of view of the OKW, which had their inner justification, were to be respected by me as a soldier, as long as I fight for the Palatinate militarily possible under the strictest examination of conscience. I believed that I could affirm this on the basis of my personal information about the situation in the armies.

If the Palatinate could not be held, at least skilful military operations succeeded in delaying the attack across the Rhine in this exceptionally difficult terrain for the attacker.

There was no doubt in Army Group H about the necessity of the battle for the Rhine.

That's why:

Holding the Rhine and the Saar-Palatinate Bastion;

Elimination or narrowing of the Remagen bridgehead.
Once again at the Führer's headquarters

On March 15, 1945, I again discussed the situation with Hitler. The immediate cause was the unfavorable development in the Saar-Palatinate.

Hitler generally agreed with my remarks.

He authorized the abandonment of the Westwall on the right wing of the 1st Army and withdrawal of this wing to intermediate positions.

He acknowledged the difficulty of the situation at the Remagen bridgehead, but wanted further sustained efforts to narrow it down. importance of the Ruhr and Saar regions as well as the Rhine-Main industry was touched upon

A division from Denmark in full strength was to be supplied on an accelerated basis; he could not hold out the prospect of other divisions, since otherwise the buildup program and thus the continuation of the war would be jeopardized. On the other hand, replacements and supplies, especially tanks, were to arrive on an accelerated and large scale so that the worn-out divisions could be replenished and gain full fighting strength.

An increase in fighter flying was expected in the foreseeable future; he had taken special measures to intensify and speed up production.

He agreed with the subordination of the military districts (without military district VII)

Driving back from the Führer's headquarters on the night of 15/16 March, I had the impression that Hitler counted rock-solid on a defensive success in the east, that the events in the west neither surprised nor particularly worried him, since he assumed that heable to clear them up after the situation in the east had been consolidated with the forces then freed up and the new deployments, and that hebelievedunconditional implementation of his orders regardingintensification of the supply

The reality was different.

The Denmark Division was not fully combat-capable and was put on the march so late that it was out of the question for Remagen, but had to be delivered halfway to the suffering Army High Command 11 in the Kassel area. The supply of personnel and materiel was continuously announced, but arrived only drop by drop.

Where the sources of failure lay, whether with the Quartermaster General, the commander of the replacement units and his subordinate agencies, the Ministry of Armaments, the railroads, or the Army Groups, I was unable to verify at the time.

The loss of the Palatinate

Something essential, the withdrawal of the right wing of the 1st Army from the Westwall, I had obtained from Hitler; still from the Führer's headquarters I passed on the order to my chief. The critical development of the situation with the 7th Army prompted me to go AOK 7 as early as 16/17 March. The only task I assigned the army was to defend the Nahe, thus covering the northern flank of the 1st Army. With the 1st Army's right wing folding back and the transition to the Nahe defense, the retreat of Army Group G had begun; it could lead to disaster if the outer wing positions of the two armies, especially the hard-pressed 7th Army right wing, did not hold. The Rhine-Palatinate bridgehead hardly sufficient in a favorable tactical position for simultaneous movements from three directions

In this difficult situation, Army Group Command G had only one task, to bring the movements of the inner wings of the 7th and 1st Armies into line with those of the right wing of the 7th Army. It demanded energetic tactical leadership close to the front, not useless operational considerations after the overall clearing of the Palatinate had not been initiated in time. All did not yet seem lost, since a counterattack under sufficiently strong tank support could clear the breach at Kreuznach. The success was more than modest for a variety of reasons: a short-term delay!

Developments on March 19, 1945, showed unbearable tensions in the Palatinate and also near Remagen. Right wing of the 7th Army was unhinged; the attack in the direction of Oppenheim could become the greatest danger to Army Group G. Event of the simultaneous action of a group of forces via Kreuznach in the direction of Worms-Ludwigshafen. For this purpose, inner wings of the two armies in the central Palatinate had been broken through, overrun, and surrounded with parts. That the Palatinate could no longer be held was obvious. A "free operation" was no longer to be thought of, since all conditions for it were missing. Any hasty action had to be avoided, since it could have dangerous psychological effects and, given the narrowness of the space, would lead to marching difficulties that, under enemy pressure on the ground and from the air, were bound to have unforeseeable consequences.

The importance I attached to the stormily developing situation prompted me to stay in the Palatinate four times between March 16-17 and 21-22. Much depended on the conduct of the 7th Army; it had to know that the fate of the 1st Army depended on its conduct of the battle, but that the 1st Army had become decisive for the tempo of its movements. The task was difficult, purely tactical

point of view, the situation of even more difficult decisive factor was that the left wing on the Rhine, the rotary wing, held; it had to adapt to the center as it moved back. The Palatinate Forest was massif and pivot, its possession a prerequisite for later movements. Army High Command 1, under its commander-in-chief General der Infanterie Foertsch, with his able chief of staff, General Hauser, excelled in foresight, decision-making, and command. With the shortage of operating fuel and the inevitable frictions and mishaps associated with ground and air combat, surprises had to be expected; they also occurred in abundance.

During a discussion with Minister Speer and Herr Roechling at my headquarters, which had to be interrupted for a short time by a bombing raid *** - report came that American tanks were in front of Kaiserslautern. Again, I was able to ascertain Army High Command 1 despite the highest nervous tension, it had taken all possible and necessary tactical measures gratifying to see that even the weak countermeasures on the right wing of the 7th Army had taken the momentum out of enemy advance. I saw for myself the buildup of the Rhine bridgeheads at Speyer and Germersheim, which had been reinforced by strong anti-aircraft forces, and could see night after night since March 16 that the rearward portions of the armies were rolling backward across the Rhine in uninterrupted succession. In the event of an enemy advance along the Rhine from the north, in the direction of Speyer, the air forces had to fight this movement to the point of self-sacrifice. I was happy that the enemy action did not call for this use of the airmen. Last days until the final clearing of the west bank of the Rhine were left to initiative leadership of the armies, general commands and divisions thanks to their energy that the endless difficulties, clogging roads, enemy air raids on occupied roads, paths, and towns, loss of teams, motor vehicles, and communications, overcome. The main credit is due to AOK 1 (General Foertsch), which from March 21 onward was in supreme command of all troops in the Rhenish Palatinate, while the high command of Army Group G and the

*** The enemy must have known exactly the furnishings and habits of the staff, as in three previous instances of attacks on my headquarters. After all, the first Jabo attacks were carried out against the fully occupied dining rooms and my bedroom and study.

7th Army had to build up the Rhine defenses on the east bank of the Rhine. At bridgeheads, after the clearing of Ludwigshafen on 21 March, Speyer, Germersheim, and Maxau were still to be held, each for the passage of a corps group. On 23 March I was able to give order to clear these bridgeheads, which was completed on 24/25 March 1945.

The enemy operation had been adapted to the characteristics of the projecting Saar-Palatinate bastion. The enemy had chosen the earliest moment for the attack, but not taken advantage of the pincer operation.

The tank attacks were bold, daring against the right wing of the 7th Army. rapid succession of individual operations - a sign that the pattern observed in Italy had been broken - noteworthy, along with the adroit leadership and the ruthless use of armored forces in terrain that was decidedly unfavorable for the use of larger tank formations. Based on my experience in similar Italian terrain, I had not expected the American armored forces to succeed quickly, although the partial failure of the worn-out German force had facilitated American combat leadership. I was surprised, however, that the breakthrough armored forces did not take advantage of the moment and, supported by their airborne forces, cut off Army Group G from the Rhine bridges, thus taking the first step toward their destruction. The fact that the latter was able to cross the Rhine with notable, albeit badly disrupted, forces and establish a new defense behind the stream is due to this mistake on the part of the Allied leadership.

The involvement of the enemy air force also deserves the lion's share of the credit. The Palatinate

I attribute surprisingly rapid German collapse in these areas, which I had not expected on basis of consultations with the commanders-in-chief and various division commanders following causes.

The troops had been fighting for months almost without interruption; Hitler's repeatedly emphasized halting order caused losses of precisely the best personnel and material, which could no longer be replaced. In addition, there were disruptive interventions by Hitler, which took time to reverse or change. Hitler's measures spoke of alienation from the front; one could not just lead from the green table.

With all recognition of the outstanding performance of leadership and troops, the heavy defensive battles of the past months had had more of an effect physically and psychologically than I could have assumed on the basis of the initial reviews. Visits to the fighting front were impossible for me in view of advanced situation and the breadth of the front. Knowledge of the actual conditions on the left wing of the 7th Army and on the right wing

of the 1st Army would probably have prompted me to bring about a change in my assignment with Hitler with greater emphasis, without this being able to change anything essential in the final result

However, I must mention that even among the weak remnants of the fighting divisions there was a splendid fighting spirit. The fact that the weakest of fuses sufficed to reduce the momentum of pre-bounced American tank wedges or to deflect them in another direction led to the conclusion that in the terrain of the Saar-Palatinate, which was particularly favorable for defense, a tactically correctly executed stalling battle would have made the evasive maneuver across the Rhine less costly in terms of losses.

Stocks of ammunition and operating supplies were precariously low for a decisive moving battle, and supplies were erratic. The American attack came so early that the grouping of reserves could not be accomplished. Above all, a Panzer or Panzer Grenadier Division as a reserve

The authorization I obtained at the Führer's headquarters on the night of March 15/16 for the partial abandonment of the West Wall came too late. One day earlier, and the "Pele mele" in the Palatinate Forest could have been avoided in its worst form.

Our own air force was too weak; in addition, the weather the Rhine valley unfavorable. The enemy air force, on the other hand, was overpowering; the communications links in the Palatinate region, which were difficult in themselves, suffered considerably as a result of bombing raids.

And yet, precisely because of the desperate situation, the struggle of the amalgamated units, willing to fight and loyal to their duty, denotes a high point of the German war effort.

The crossing at Oppenheim and its consequences

I had deliberately delayed the clearing of the left bank of the Rhine, including the bridgeheads, until the last possible moment. Due to this that mass of Army Group on the right bank of the Rhine could be provisionally refreshed where hard fighting took place, as on the left wing of Army Group G, the enemy did not attack across the Rhine until weeks later - late March/mid-April. Different on the right wing, where the divisions of Patton's Army forced the Rhine crossing almost immediately after overwhelming the German West Rhine fuses I had no doubt that the Upper Rhine could not be held for weeks either; our forces had become too

worn and too thin for that. But still: the Rhine was an obstacle that could only be taken quickly if too much reliance was placed on the natural defensive strength of the obstacle. Army High Command 7, which led on the right bank of the Rhine, was aware of my views and had been alerted to a probable attempt at a crossing. I was all the more surprised by the report of the almost peacetime American crossing of the Rhine at Oppenheim during the night of March 22-23. Operationally, it gave the enemy the opportunity to push into the rear of the 1st Army, which was still fighting with elements west of the Rhine, and to secure the Frankfurt basin for new operations. It also revealed tactical deficiencies in the German defense of the Rhine that were bound to multiply the momentum of enemy operations and have an unfavorable effect on the mood of his own command and troops. Since no provision was made for immediate counterattacks, an attempt had to be made to throw the still weak enemy forces across the Rhine in a counterattack requiring stronger forces. This failed despite the deployment of an elite unit with assault guns and sufficient artillery - I believe I must state that it was not due to the brave leader of the attack, Colonel Runge. He died a soldier's death in the process, which I particularly mourned.

Now there was no longer any prospect of stopping the advance of the 3rd and 45th American Divisions and the other divisions that quickly followed. The terrain was too unfavorable for this, and the troops were too spent, too weak, and not sufficiently equipped with heavy weapons. In the meantime, however, Army High Command 7, which had become more active, and Army High Command 1 had organized the units with special vigor and built up a defensive front. This front did not permit any decisive resistance, but it should allow fighting back to lines of resistance behind which, supported by terrain, certain success of the defense, i.e. the wearing down of the enemy forces, could be thought of.

As already mentioned, I expected a bypass of the northern wing of the 1st Army and a rolling up of the Black Forest front as well as a relatively effortless occupation of the Rhine-Main plain south of the Main. Forcing the Main to the north was not in my mind at this point. Such an operation had to lead to a fragmentation of the enemy forces, all the more so since I considered the enemy attack between Frankfurt and Hanau to be feasible only with stronger forces. This required a large amount of bridge equipment, the supply of which, according to my calculations, could only be at the Oppenheim bridge site if interests of the remaining enemy forces were neglected. On the other hand, the strength of the American-French forces, which had been deployed south of the Moselle, made a diversion to the

north seem possible, especially if the decision was to be made in the Berlin area. The northeast thrust led via Hanau-Fulda to central Germany in the area between the Harz Mountains and the Thuringian Forest, i.e., right into the heart of Germany, near the last unoccupied German armaments center and the Russian front.

However, this movement had to overcome extraordinary terrain difficulties, including narrows that could be blocked longer period of time with relatively few forces. Gaining time, however, was of primary importance to ensure the planned course of operations in the east.

No clarity could yet be had as to enemy intentions on 24 March 1945; all considerations culminated in conjecture. Advancing forces to the Main River in the direction of Frankfurt and Hanau could not be regarded as the first step toward an eccentric operation across the Main; this was necessary to secure the left flank of all operations going farther south was important, however, even without regard to this eccentric operation, that the barrier of the Main be held.

Despite the favorable terrain, Army Group G faced an exceptionally difficult task. mobile divisions, anti-tank weapons and long-range artillery operating material and supplies. training and weaponry, the newly refreshed infantry divisions brought with them little of what was indispensable for the moderate form of mobile warfare, for "stalling defense."

As Remagen had become the grave for Army Group B, so the bridgehead Oppenheim seemed to become so for Army Group G. Here, too, the initial bump, which soon created a larger hole, ate up all the forces made mobile at all from the other front elements and the replacement units brought in from the rear. In addition, the German area was geographically known, but only to a small extent fortified. Of course, the absolute lack of aviators and the now reduced flak support were particularly disadvantageous here as well. The motorized flak units had been used up, the limit of the transfer of fixed flak to makeshift motorized flak had been reached, and places where flak still existed on a large scale were only sporadically available; support by aviators could hardly be counted on any longer. The top air force leadership was rightly accused of this failure. As an aviator and old Army soldier, however, I had to oppose criticism as the panacea placing the air forces under the Army's command.

Where there was nothing, even the best leadership could not perform. The reasons that led to the hemorrhaging and disintegration of the German

Air Force are not generally known, but do not belong here ^{†††}). Bomber forces of every kind were lacking. Fighter production was ramping up, but at this stage was brought to a virtual standstill by the collapse of Germany's industrial areas and the shattering of its transportation network. The technical performance of turbo fighters was superior to that of enemy fighters. The aeronautical training was also sufficient. However, these high-powered aircraft also had major disadvantages: Dependence on oversized, perfectly level runways, unfavorable takeoff performance and difficult landing conditions, short flight times, and high vulnerability in airspace controlled by the enemy, takeoff and landing required special protection, which was not always available to a sufficient extent. Air threats interrupted flight operations. Unfavorable weather conditions made risky flying difficult. In March/April, this was particularly unpleasant in the Rhine valley with its fog and the different weather conditions in different zones. Furthermore, something quite general: I consider a leadership that does not live in a gun to be worse than a worse expert leadership.

Commander-in-Chief West, following suggestions from the army groups, considered at that time whether the entire Rhine front should be withdrawn. I finally refrained from doing so, since this would only have led to a haphazard retreat. Our own troops were ponderous, almost immobile, encumbered with as yet unorganized rearward formations, and in part embattled; the enemy was superior in everything, especially in mobility and in the air. Without curbing the enemy's unrestrained forward movement, its own rearward movement had to be overtaken and overrun. This warfare would have become an end in itself, not a means to an end whose goal was to gain time. Every day won on the Rhine meant a strengthening of the front, simply by clearing and sifting the stray soldiers in the rear. Even if I did not allow the front to be withdrawn, the division battle groups of the 7th Army standing east of the Rhine were allowed to yield to steadily increasing enemy pressure. Surrender of the 1st Army to the 7th Army facilitated its task. The American armored divisions nevertheless broke through the thinned front for their sweeping movements in a northeasterly and easterly direction. The enemy group advancing in a southerly direction was continually reinforced by infusions of French forces from the left bank of the Rhine before the beginning of its decisive attack against the 19th.

Between 27 and 29 March the decision was made between Idstein and Aschaffenburg. The heavy task of delaying the advance of the 3rd American Army into central Germany and that of the 7th American Army

^{†††} See the appendix: The German Air Force, Its Rise and Decline.

into southern Germany now fell to the 7th Army under its new, active commander-in-chief, General der Infanterie von Obstfelder. The incomprehensible behavior of one armored division made difficult the task of Army High Command 7 of blocking the major avenues of advance of the 3rd American Army from the west via Giessen to Hersfeld and via Gelnhausen to Fulda. Particularly disadvantageous, however, was the fact that Army Group B, joining on the right, had lost all influence on its left wing. Commander-in-Chief West placed in this area the Deputy General Command XII. Armee-Korps under Gen. Osterkamp, which did justice to the difficult situation. By the end of March the 7th Army was in loose formation forward Hersfeld to Fulda and in the Spessart.

The 1st Army had had to expand further to the right in accordance with the 7th Army's shift and had repeatedly tried to keep in touch with the left wing of the 7th Army. It did not succeed. The 1st Army was pushed back to the Miltenberg-Eberbach-Heidelberg position on March 30. The expansion of the important Tauber position was thus jeopardized.

The fan-like dispersal of enemy forces from the bridgeheads at Oppenheim and Mannheim from south to east to northeast violated the basic operational and tactical law of the formation of centers of gravity; the fact that these movements could succeed proved conclusively the degraded combat value of the German forces. Destruction of an American tank group advancing against Hammelburg, however, also proved that tight leadership could still bring success even in this final situation of the war. The Allied Breakout from the Remagen Bridgehead and its Consequences

As had been feared, conditions in Army Group B had also deteriorated extraordinarily in the meantime. As with Army Group G the days from March 18 to 20 became fateful. Unfortunately, Field Marshal Model and I were only able to speak to each other by telephone during these days. However, I knew Field Marshal Model as a proven leader with the greatest experience an army commander could ever gain. In my opinion, he had the right to act independently and the duty not to wait for advice from the Commander-in-Chief West.

The initial American center-of-gravity attacks to the north and northeast were followed, after reaching the commanding heights, by a swing around to the east, which clearly indicated the intention to break through. These attacks then expanded in a southeasterly direction and finally, resuming the attacks

to the north and northeast, led to the southern attack against localities there with the adjacent heights

It was clear that with such a rapid expansion of the bridgehead all the German forces brought in in slow succession were sufficient only to close the gaps and to make short counterattacks, but no longer for a counterattack to restore the situation, not even to build up a resistant front. Large units could no longer be provided by the OKW, and were no longer larger reserves of their own that were immediately available. In addition, the Rhine crossing at Oppenheim had to influence German operations north of the Main as well. At least newly brought division battle groups of the 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions, the Panzer Lehr Division, the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 340th Volks Grenadier Division had minor local successes in various counterattacks without, however, being able to stop the attack. Perhaps the last opportunity to do so would have been on March 13. As early as March 16, the enemy reached the highway, over which he advanced in a broad front two days later, tearing up the front by March 20. At the same time he was on the Wied.

Model's leadership was under the preconceived notion that the main enemy attack would be directed northward. Suggestions of Army High Command 15 and repeated indications of the Commander-in-Chief West to intercept the impending breakthrough in its definite thrust the east found no visible effect. A personal consultation at the Army Group command post with Model led to a convergence of views but to no decisive action. Many reasons can be given for Model's idea of operations ^{†††}; the result, however, was devastating - a hole that gradually extended from the Sieg to the Lahn, which even the most far-reaching improvisations were no longer sufficient to close especially since the defense between the Lahn and the Main was threatened on its flanks. In no phase of these operations was I particularly worried about the flanks of Army Group B, since any attacks in the north on the Sieg and in the south on the Lahn could be stopped or at least slowed down. However, I was almost physically depressed by the neglect of the front, which was falling into the final process of disintegration as a result of the turning of the front forces to the north against the Sieg and the independent swinging out and retreat of the wing corps.

The situation with the 5th Panzer Army (Colonel General Harpe) by no means demanded the movements of the right wing of the 15th Army. Harpe

^{†††} The reasoning which became known to me from a so-called "factual report" (October 1951) that Model wanted to cause the Allied forces to advance faster on Berlin by deliberately tearing open the gap, is implausible. In the war-historical works of his boss not a word of it is mentioned, rather the opposite!

spoke frankly about the deficiencies also inherent in this army in terms of goodness, training, equipment, and mobility; he hinted at the dangers that could arise for his army from the behavior of the two neighboring armies; I did not notice anything of the flank fear that was attributed to the army. Frontal attacks were unlikely here. A perhaps possible entrenchment attack need not be feared, since the Rhine front in this section was strongly built up and well defended.

The Ruhr area itself was a sphinx for any attacker, and its resistance not be estimated at all. The flanks were protected in the north by the Dortmund-Ems Canal and the Ruhr, in the south by the Sieg River, which was very difficult to overcome even for a superior opponent; once he had happily crossed it, he stood in the middle of the industrial area with its tremendous possibilities for surprise. At this stage, the Ruhr protected itself. This was the basis for my constant instructions to supply forces to the 15th Army (Remagen section) with the greatest acceleration. Here I missed the almost proverbial energy of Field Marshal Model. This day, the operations of Army Group B remain incomprehensible to me.

In the first days after the loss of Remagen Bridge (until March 25), it was a normal defense from which counterattacks had to be launched to regain the lost ground. From March 25/26, a different combat procedure had to take place. From this point on, the American armored divisions took advantage of the breakthrough to move quickly. As a result, the American infantry divisions hung farther back each day and their immediate cooperation with the armored divisions became more difficult. Distances between the American infantry divisions and the armored divisions, which were also not marching in unison and were in some cases deployed over a wide area, further increased by the fact that some of the infantry divisions were turned northward against the Sieg.

Our measures had to be adapted to this behavior of the opponent.

In the first period, success could only be achieved by deploying large, united formations: since they could not be brought in, success failed to. In the second phase, the American approach demanded a complete change in our tactics. It was necessary to break away from the idea of an operation and, by tactically ingenious measures, to hold up the enemy forces in the front, blocking the roads behind individual columns, in order to attack and destroy the enemy tank forces relying on themselves by flanking attacks with armor-piercing weapons of every kind. No large units were necessary for this; here smaller mixed divisions of about regimental strength, in which pioneers and flak could not be missing in addition to the anti-tank

weapons reap victory laurels One thing was a prerequisite: that the divisions did not turn off to the north or give up contact with the enemy on the left wing, but that they remained in their natural direction of retreat to the east

this in mind, I repeatedly spoke with Field Marshal Model, most recently on March 26 or 27 at his command post, in order to finally bring about a fundamental change in the conduct of the battle. Field Marshal Model agreed with my view; however, nothing changed in the conduct of the battle; either he could no longer get his way or the troops were no longer receptive enough; it is also possible that the heavy weapons could not be consolidated quickly enough at the danger points. In the case of Model's personality, I would like to assume the last two possibilities. Thus, at the end of March, the unpleasant picture emerged that non-decisive fronts, which were not attacked, were too strong, but that decisive fronts were insufficiently manned, and that the necessary tactical measures were ordered and carried out disproportionately slowly.

In order to escape confinement in the Ruhr, Army Group B considered disengaging at the end of March and pushing through to the south. This idea was no longer feasible. The enemy forces on the right bank of the Rhine were already too strong to dare break out to the south and push through the entire depth of the area. Only an attempt to break out to the east had a greater chance of success. First preparatory steps had been taken.

Following the preconceived operational idea, Army Group B had moved its command post to Olpe in the Ruhr, i.e., to the extreme right wing, thus completely eliminating itself for the command of the center and the left wing. The consequences were obvious. I believe retrospectively that the course of the battle would have been different if Field Marshal Model had stayed behind the center of his army group, albeit far away. It would certainly not have come to the unfortunate "Ruhr Fortress." As far as I knew Model, he could have drawn the divisions from the Ruhr to himself and thus created the framework for a cohesive front further to the rear. At least the command and defense conditions, which had become untenable for the leadership in the center of the army group, would not have appeared in such a sharp form.

AOK 15 would also have found its place again in its designated front section. Thus the Commander-in-Chief West himself had to intervene frequently in mediatory and corrective capacity until the shift of AOK 7 to the north on 28 March and the insertion of AOK 11 on 2 April restored some semiof orderly command and control, without even a minimum of troops being available.

Given the extraordinary progress of the American attack from the Remagen bridgehead and the resulting thrusts from southeast to north, I considered a Rhine crossing between Koblenz and Bingen unlikely, especially since the crossing conditions were not favorable terrain-wise. The forces deployed there were too strong in relation to those on the danger fronts. Commander-in-Chief West needed reserves of high quality and could be successfully employed in decisive phases. I therefore ordered on March 19 that the 6th SS Mountain Division, with preliminary assembly destination Wiesbaden and later use with the 7th Army, be pulled out. Disproportionately soon thereafter, the enemy crossed the Rhine between Koblenz and St. Goarshausen and formed smaller bridgeheads. Further south, the 7th Army had weakened the Rhine front to Mainz - quite in my sense - down to postings, in order to be able to supply forces to the more endangered Main front. I refused to complete evacuation, since the forces freed by the evacuation would not have been at all sufficient to build up a defensible front at less favorable, though considerably shortened sections of terrain between Limburg-Idstein-Hofheim. The next consequence would have been that the enemy would have crossed the Rhine at Wiesbaden without a fight and thus would not only have been able to open up the Main crossings between Frankfurt and Hanau from the rear but also to advance with considerable forces into the almost unoccupied area north of the Main and via Fulda-Hersfeld into the central German area.

After days of crisis, the situation on March 26, 1945, in the area on both sides of the Main was the following in broad strokes, starting on the left:

American tank tops approached the Main River near Frankfurt, Hanau, and Aschaffenburg.

Strong enemy tank forces were advancing from the north against Limburg.

LXXXIX AK had laboriously prevented an enemy breakthrough in a weak hedging line between Bergnassau and Nastätten.

The 6th SS Mountain Division was advancing on Limburg to defend the Lahn section.

An officer-student unit from Wetzlar was approaching Idstein, securing the highway and road leading to Frankfurt.

The 11th Panzer Division was advancing on Frankfurt as ordered, somewhere in the terrain between the Lahn and Main.

A new security line was being established between Bodheim-Ziegenberg by the Deputy General Command XII. AK was under construction.

What could be done with the few forces available to quell the main

danger in the area of Army Group B had been done. Would they be enough? On this day, too, the agonizing question arose: stand fast or take evasive action? From below came the constant demand for "free operation", which after dutiful examination I did not consider possible, from above came the constant advice to keep as far west as possible. Added to this were my own considerations: If anywhere at all, it was only possible to hold at the strong river obstacles of the Main and the Lahn; only at such sections could defensive successes still be achieved. Strong flak of all calibers was available there and had become the backbone of the defense. If I decided to evacuate, then the ground forces just mentioned; the battle then had to be fought in open terrain or on the edges of the mountains, e.g. the Taunus, which, as experience had shown, required a lot of forces. The units relying on the foot march would be overtaken, bypassed and smashed by the motorized enemy forces. Therefore, the Main and Lahn rivers had to be held; this had to be attempted to create more favorable prospects for the stalling battle by gaining time. I took it for granted that at these important sections chance successes for the enemy by seizing bridges not been blown up or had been badly blown up would be impossible. I had not had a single conversation with the commanders under my command without pointing this out.

The events were precipitating:

On March 27, 1945, the Lahn River was opened at Diez, the 6th SS Geb. Division was pushed into the Taunus Mountains, and the LXXXIX AK was torn open at Nastätten and Zorn. Removal of Katzenelnbogen and Hohenstein. The LXXXV AK lost Hanau, due to inadequate blasting and guarding of the bridge, and the 413th Infantry Division (Ersatz Division) could not prevent the collapse of the Main defenses south of Aschaffenburg for the same reason.

On March 28, the defenses at Idstein and the resistance of the weak forces of the LXXXIX AK were shattered, and Frankfurt taken by the enemy. An American tank group made a raid in the direction of Hammelburg.

Thus the defense of the lower reaches of the Main had collapsed. The enemy, partly favored by luck, created starting position for far-reaching decisive operations in bold action against a heavily outnumbered opponent.

I have described these battles in somewhat more detail in order to show extent to which the Commander-in-Chief West had to intervene directly in the conduct of the fight. This was also the reason why I held out

so long (until late in the evening on March 27) at my command post at Ziegenberg/Adlerhorst west of Nauheim, not least for moral reasons. On 28 March in the morning I arrived at my new command post (command post in the tunnel east of Fulda)

The success against Army Group B was built on the surprising removal of the bridge at Remagen and the equally rapid and energetic exploitation of this "gift". Technically and tactically, nothing was left undone to quickly form a sufficiently large bridgehead and expand it into a base for an operation with a far-reaching objective. These were facts that compelled recognition, even if one took into account given shortcomings and mistakes that were the fault of the German leadership and that were inherent in the troops. These deficiencies must be acknowledged, even though the ongoing attacks on the entire front were conducted by an opponent far superior in strength with the strongest air support.

The following operations revealed an exact knowledge of the German situation. I would have thought it wrong to make right and left turns to roll up the Rhine fronts or even to attack the Ruhr. Sooner or later, the Ruhr had to fall into the lap of the Allies as ripe fruit. The intermittent dispersal of the American thrust groups was a danger to the whole operation of the American Army Group, as were the wide gaps within the large motorized units. A sharper grouping by breadth and depth would probably have resulted in an even more rapid and decisive success.

Even after the first few days, the German leadership was forced out of rigid defense into a kind of battle of movement improvisations necessary for this, the actual weakness, especially in combat resources, and the movement and leadership difficulties on the German side caused by Allied air superiority were not fully exploited by the Allies; this allowed the conclusion that the enemy was sparing itself. Whether this was due to the principle of "fighting cheap" or to the fighting morale caused by the near end of the war, I did not dare to decide. "Conserving forces" and "fighting hard" are absolutely compatible.

The operational idea of the Rhine crossing south of the Lahn was not quite clear to me from the course of the battle, since driving the tanks over Limburg-Idstein made the Rhine crossing unnecessary.

In this section, too, the enemy air force played a decisive role in the success. The "Ruhr Fortress"

I refer to the task of Army Group B to establish contact with forces of

the 11th Army with its eastward elements with all forethought as a "breakout attempt" It could not represent anything else, since the right time had already passed, the mobile forces inside and outside the cauldron were very weak, and the 12th Army, in formation in the Magdeburg area east of the Elbe, could not appear on the battlefield for another three weeks. Complicating matters further was the folding back of the left wing of Army Group H into the Ruhr, which gave the right wing of Army Group Montgomery freedom of operation into the flank of the German breakthrough forces. But the attempt had to be made, since the better opportunities in March had not been exploited, or perhaps could not be exploited. Now, however, the greatest haste was required; the advance eastward from the Winterberg area had to be supported in the process by forces of the now improvised 11th Army from the area west of Kassel. Our efforts to provide the most indispensable forces and my instructions given on the spot were to prove useless. On the morning of April 1, 1945, after arriving at my command post at Reinhardsbrunn in the Thuringian Forest, my chief reported to me that

According to a "Führer order" received shortly before, the attempts to break out of the Ruhr cauldron were to be stopped and Army Group B was to defend the Ruhr area as a "Ruhr fortress" in direct subordination to the OKW.

I was more than concerned about this decision of the OKW, since it contradicted all planning. OKW may have been concerned that after the LIII AK attack east of Winterberg had stalled, a breakthrough could no longer be successful, and an encircled Army Group would tie up so many enemy forces that the further advance of a strong attack group eastward into the central German area would be questioned. Furthermore, the OKW perhaps believed that by referring the Army Group supplies of the Ruhr, it would see them supplied and thus be able to feed more to the other formations of the Western Front. One must understand these reasons, even if one cannot approve of them.

In fact, the Ruhr area could be fed for two to three weeks at most with the troops of the army group and the numerous population. Army supplies were in short supply. Operationally the Ruhr was of no interest to General Eisenhower; his objective lay farther east. The capture of strong Allied confinement forces could only be expected if the Ruhr was defended stubbornly, i.e., offensively. According to my observations so far, this was not to be expected without further ado. 300,000 men of Army Group B could not be remotely replaced, closing the gap between the Teutoburg and

Thuringian Forests

As was to be expected, the fighting around the Ruhrkessel unwound and led to the surrender on April 17, the reason for which was probably to be found primarily in the fact that the leadership and the troops no longer understood meaning of the war. The heavy losses of an American division near Siegburg alone proved that it was still possible to fight on the German side.

With April 17, the tragedy of Army Group B was over; for the Ruhr and its exploitation began a new struggle in a different form!

the leader of Army Group B, Field Marshal Model, I tribute A daring, bold soldier voluntarily left our ranks. Who can blame him - looking back today? He will never fade from my memory!

The question arises as to whether this development could have been avoided and what operational-tactical solution would have been desirable, an interesting study but beyond the scope of these lines.
The Allied breakthrough on the Lower Rhine

While events became increasingly dramatic in Army Groups G and B, Army Group H was able to carry out regrouping and refreshment measures without significant disruption until 20 March. Enemy air operations in a clearly defined area and bombing raids on Army Group and Army headquarters, fogging and staging; of bridge material indicated the enemy's probable attack objectives between Emmerich and Dinslaken, centered on both sides of Rees. The telephone conversations I had with the commander in chief instilled confidence. had escaped my notice during my examinations that the Volks-Artillerie-Korps and the Volks-Werfer Korps were being held back as reserves instead of being deployed at Rees. This reserve formation contradicted my views. I considered the deployment of the two panzer divisions behind the center to be in need of improvement, but not the decisive disadvantage that it turned out to be.

The brilliant spring weather permitted Field Marshal Montgomery a large-scale air landing and the full utilization of his airmen for ground combat, so that Army Group H had to expect every greatest difficulties in movement.

The attack of the English-Canadian and American armies, supported by the air landing, rolled off as expected. One had to reckon with setbacks; to clear them up had to be left in the first place to the divisions, corps and armies. I had in itself understanding: for the thought of the army group to

eliminate immediately with whole measures the incursions and to smash the air landing. The result, however, was that the Army Group had deployed its large reserves before the situation on the front was even remotely clear. This was a mistake that had to and did take revenge later.

It was pitiful that the only success of the large reserves was a bogged-down attack in the direction of Dinslaken. Had the operation been more restrained from 23.7.24 and on 24 March, had Rees been artillery reinforced accordingly, and had the XXXXVII Panzer Corps with the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division made available in the area around Ysselburg and the 116th Panzer Division in the Bocholt-Borken area, the situation on 25 March evening would certainly have been more favorable. With the chosen approach, which I had omitted to correct and the poorly executed operation, not only was the battle for the Rhine lost, but also the subsequent operations were given their character.

Subsequently, events were borne by Army Group H with certain fatalism that I could detect in every conversation. The absence of the impulsive and tactically highly gifted General Schlemm (Fallschirmjäger AOK 1) made itself very felt. The right wing, especially the paratrooper divisions, held up well. The crisis point was on both sides of the Lippe River. Effective help could be given there only by deploying a full-fledged force. Only the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division could do this, but its deployment was delayed. Although the front could be held until March 28, it had become too weak to be held in the long run. The shift of American forces to the English right wing was the prelude to a breakthrough. In the case of Army Group B, the staff of Army Group H moved off to the north instead of expressing interest in holding the western front by pushing up against the endangered wing.

For this purpose, Army Group H considered it proper on 28 March, at a time when it was still possible to speak of a front just on the left wing of the Army Group, to give an assessment of the situation to the Commander-in-Chief West and OKW went far beyond its scope. This immediate report by the Army Group had the great disadvantage that the Commander-in-Chief West could not comment on it before it was passed on to the OKW and decided upon by the OKW, nor could he gain any determining influence in view of Hitler's bitterness over this report. The situation report was a prime example of how to anger Adolf Hitler. It was to be expected of a high leader that he was also able to grasp the superior in a psychologically correct way. This report said relatively little about the unfortunate struggle of one's own army group and its causes, but moved into operational considerations about events in Army Group B, in order to justify from it the necessity of the

detachment movements desired by Army Group H. If one could already have different opinions about the operational idea presented, it was psychologically wrong to tell the superior that he could not overlook a major operational situation. Hitler perceived this as the "unbearable know-it-all" of the General Staff. I feel justified in this criticism because I was the commander-in-chief who wrested freedom from Hitler for his leadership in the Italian campaign. But in a very different way! What the Führer would be in this case was clear to me.

I was most indignant about the withdrawal of the XXXXVII Panzer Corps from the front. I still believed that the Ruhr was not an immediate target for the Americans. I still expected the 2nd British Army and the 9th American Army to continue their operations in a northeasterly and easterly direction, that is, past the Ruhr. Any addition of forces to the Ruhr was therefore a false investment. If it was connected with a tearing up of the front, this was more than erroneous.

The counterattacks I had ordered on the southern flank of the enemy forces that had broken through also failed to materialize, so that between 28 and 30 March I again clearly stated my view of the situation and the necessary conclusions during a personal visit. In this way I also wanted to anticipate a change of command in the area of Army Group H, which I expected.

The left wing, the right wing and the center of the paratroopers' AOK fought fiercely and were able to maintain a closed front from Arnhem to Rheine by evading to the north. There they were joined by Division z. b. V. 471, which excellently solved the task of blocking the Teutoburg Forest with its troops unaccustomed to combat. This was to the credit of the division commander, General Heckel, proof that where there was an energetic will, pre-battered enemy tank groups could be stopped. The south, the Wehrkreiskommando VI was to provide security, but no contact was established with it.

The Netherlands had no significance at this stage of the war. The units deployed there were not a value factor in the military power game. I saw the protection of the German area, the closing of the gaps that now existed, as much more urgent.

Disgruntled by the pessimism expressed by Army Group H in its assessment of the situation, Hitler was again turned against Colonel General Blaskowitz by rejecting a "Führer order" issued at the end of March, which I also considered impracticable, according to which enemy forces advancing toward Münster were to be attacked from the north and south.

and the gap closed. This was expressed by the dispatch of Generaloberst Student to support Blaskowitz.

On the enemy side, the most difficult task had fallen to Montgomery; he faced with his armies, which had suffered great losses in the previous battles west of the Rhine, an obstacle was very formidable and defended by divisions with recognized fighting tradition. These troops had, after all, more than ten days carry out the most urgent tactical and technical measures. He also had to count on having enough supplies. The Rhine had to be conquered in battle. The technical preparations for the crossing maneuver were exemplary massing of the forces, difficulty of the undertaking and the wealth of the Allies.

Operational considerations were complete with the choice of the attack strip and the objective of the attack; they could be required again if the attack did not go according to plan. The attack strip was operationally correct; the subsequent operations were natural politically, economically, and militarily.

The airborne landing required accurate knowledge of absolute German air superiority of part of the landing force in the artillery zone to open the gap at the 84th Division, initiating the operational success of the British Army Group. The division of the airborne forces into two spatially separated landing groups resulted in the fragmentation and crushing losses of the Eastern Group.

Here, too, it is clear that, with all due credit to the performance of the ground attack force, the air dominating aviation must be credited with the major share of the success.
The situation on the Upper Rhine in March

On the Upper Rhine, Army High Command 19, whose commander-in-chief was General der Panzertruppe Brandenberger, was

An Allied thrust through Switzerland was no longer to be feared. The enemy's main attacks unmistakably went in a different direction. The efforts of the Army High Command could now shift increasingly to its western front. This front was very strong by nature. Rhine was a military obstacle more because of its current speed than because of its width. The fortificatory constructions along the Rhine were outdated and improperly laid out; this was recognized by Hitler, so that the transfer of the main battle line to the Black Forest could be carried out. The Black Forest massif, with its perimeter and high ground, secured the southern part of

Württemberg against attack from the west. The Idsteiner Klotz, opposite the Belforter Senke, was peacetime fortified; even if it was outdated and partly worn down - a high repulsive effect remained to it. In contrast, the other fortifications fell away. The danger threatened from the northwest and north, bypassing the Black Forest, with a thrust via Heilbronn-Pforzheim in the direction of Stuttgart or even further eastward. This danger could become acute when the Saar-Palatinate had fallen and the Rhine had been crossed at Karlsruhe. To prevent or delay this was in the well-understood interest of the Black Forest Front and AOK 19. The divisions capable of large-scale combat therefore had to and could be surrendered in March to Army Group G for the defense of the Palatinate; the slow execution of the surrenders did not do justice to the pressing situation. Two divisions to be surrendered arrived too late in the area of Army Group G; their hasty and bogged-down deployment diminished their success. The difficulties of the supply lay primarily in the provision of the relief form. Closed formations were lacking; large-scale improvisations had to help out. Time was too short to form combat-ready units from these. This became noticeable later. But the Württemberg Volkssturm, for example, exceeded my expectations. Missing intelligence units could only be replaced to the smallest extent; this made command and control very difficult. Within bounds of possibility, Army High Command 19 made defensive preparations in correct recognition of the focal wing. There was time for this until the first days of April.

Review and outlook

I had been appointed Commander-in-Chief West during one of the most acute crises of the Western campaign. After gaining insight into the overall situation, I felt like a piano player to play a Beethoven sonata on an old, worn-out and out-of-tune piano in front of a large audience. In many relationships, I found conditions that contradicted my management principles, but which I was no longer able to fundamentally influence in view of the development that was in flux.

I rejected the mere criticism of the measures of the OKW and Adolf Hitler; it led nowhere. The office over which I presided and my rank were too high and too obligatory to allow me to escape the responsibility associated with the command of the Commander-in-Chief West. I was therefore responsible for the measures and actions taken under my command. If I could not reconcile Hitler's thoughts and orders with my conscience and my view of the situation, only me as one of the highest

military leaders of the German Reich was to interpret and mitigate them independently, which had happened many times in the past as well as in this period, - or to confront Hitler in open discussion. If I could not be convinced or achieve anything, I had to ask for dismissal from my post. I was aware of the difficulties. I note, however, that in the first six weeks of my leadership in the West I was with Hitler four times and in frank discussion I brought up my view of the situation and my concerns and found understanding. But I was far too much of a soldier not to know that not every view or order which does not suit me the necessity of which was explained to me with reason, could be rejected. I also felt that some points of contention had to be set aside at the time of the last and utmost war effort. I had always tried to arouse understanding among my subordinates the measures to be taken by means of detailed debates. I am deeply convinced that it is fundamentally more correct for a soldier and militarily more important to carry out an order once it has been given to the last consequence than to call success into question by criticizing it and the inconsistent and externally enforced execution that

I felt alienated under the conditions found in the West. There were different methods of leadership, which were certainly to be regarded as equal. My predecessor, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, rightly regarded himself as the successor to the Supreme Army Command of the First World War. The scale of the theater of war, the responsibilities and the command structure were the same. He led with clear sensitivity to the situation by issuing directives from his command post; he was almost never at the front and rarely made telephone calls. Communications up and down the line were almost exclusively in the hands of the chief of staff and the staff general officers. This method had undeniable advantages; the commander-in-chief had peace of mind and was not exposed to the stressful impressions of the front; he was the detached leader whose name was mentioned only with a certain reverence. Even though I had adopted a different method of leadership, I was sympathetic to Rundstedt's leadership. However, I could not decide to return to Rundstedt's method in general and special military conditions in the sixth year of the war too different from the "normal state" of the first years of the war. The instability that had arisen in all areas demanded personal contact with the command posts and the troops; direct influence could no longer be dispensed with. There was no unanimous opinion on almost all questions affecting the war. This system was uncomfortable for the commander-in-chief and sometimes for subordinate leadership and troops, but - the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. One saw behind the scenes and into the

hearts. I must say frankly that what I got to see in this way was not always pleasant and that what was most incriminating could not be changed to the full extent. This rehabilitation should have been started many months earlier.

Convinced that the Führer personally belongs where the troops have failed and a dangerous situation has arisen, I had chosen my command posts close to the front and consciously accepted some disadvantages. Often I had changed my command post only under pressure from the enemy. I accepted the criticism that was voiced against this, but in return I was aware that I had contributed my mite to the improvement of the situation in difficult situations. However, this procedure was only possible if the staff as such functioned and fully shared my views. This condition was fulfilled. I could not wish for a better Chief of Staff than General der Kavallerie Westphal, with whom I had already lived in harmonious fellowship. He knew my peculiarities, I knew him; he had my full confidence, full freedom in the expression of his views, had the staff firmly in hand, was highly capable organizationally and untiring in fulfillment of his responsible task. A particularly good presentation, above-average tactical ability and equally good command technique distinguished him. I had made it a habit to be briefed directly by the staff officers; unfortunately, these indispensable discussions had to a minimum due to my other commitments during these crisis weeks.

Three army groups were subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief West. I myself led an army group for far too long not to know the significance of such a high command position. The commanders-in-chief of the army groups could justifiably demand responsibility for independent command within their battle strip within the framework of the given orders. I also had the firm intention of respecting them; only some abnormal events and personal observations had caused me to intervene myself. This I did reluctantly, because although I was an old Army soldier and Heeres-General Staff officer, I came from the Air Force and was therefore with certain inner reservations.

The commanders-in-chief of the army groups were soldiers of the First World War, above-average general staff officers and leaders excellently trained in theory and practice.

The commanding generals and division commanders were different; many had not been unaffected by the past months. Under normal conditions, individual commanding generals and division commanders would have had to be changed; they not always, or no longer, combat leadership under the severe conditions that existed in the spring of 1945. The corps of leaders

created by the 100,000-man army had been too small, the deployments too numerous, and the failures during the five-year war too great for this deficiency to have been eradicated. One had to accept this; however, the superior leaders were obliged to counter such phenomena through increased personal commitment

In itself, I condemned the replacement of high leaders, which had become a practice in the German Wehrmacht over the years. In this way, many outstanding leaders were prematurely put out of action and were absent in the late years of the war. Truly necessary replacements then caused difficulties and had to be omitted in part because no high-quality replacements were available. I only resorted to these last, always very questionable means, when I noticed a general fatigue and saw that the belief in the task assigned to the leader in question no longer existed and that this destructive attitude was having an effect on the troops.

The command was complicated by the fact that the army groups and other command authorities had direct links with the OKW and Hitler's dispatch of battle reports from the armies directly to the OKW may have calmed the curiosity and nerves of the highest leadership, but it greatly disturbed the command path and the giving of orders by the local superior command authorities

At the end of March 1945, I had to tell myself mercilessly that the main part of the task set for me had not been solved. Saar-Palatinate had lost the heaviest casualties, the bridgeheads at Remagen and Oppenheim had been torn open and had become the starting points of long-range operations, and even the Lower Rhine, overcome in a surprisingly short time, had become the starting point of large-scale enemy movements. The Allied operational objectives were discernible in broad outlines; in my opinion, they aimed at: With the mass, the separation of northern and southern Germany and the establishment of communications with the Russians; with the British forces on the German right wing seizure of the North Sea ports; with the American-French southern group, the taking away of southern Germany in order to destroy or capture the German Wehrmacht thus divided into separate groups

How had these surprising successes come about? It was certain that a good German force of adequate strength and with the most necessary means of support could still accomplish its task. Also certain that with the presence of a few armored or armored-grenadier divisions in each army group and of approximately equivalent air forces, a "free operation" would also have been feasible. In fact, that Army Group H fought miserably despite the presence

of armored divisions in reserve does not in itself argue against this, but it nevertheless underscores my view that the solution to the task could not lie in "free operation." I have therefore resisted constant call for free operation for well-considered reasons; it was a utopia, a reminiscence of happier times, which no longer existed days of shortage, especially of fuel, and with the insufficient level of training of the troops I cannot conceal that the rigid representation of this idea, which was no longer tenable weighed on me and caused a certain crisis of confidence between me and the subordinate commanders-in-chief. This was unbearable. On the other hand, it was understandable that after five years of war other thoughts were still settling in the minds of the leaders, that the political situation, the military possibilities and the economic conditions were being discussed. But all this was not allowed to dominate the purely factual, tactical task. Highest soldiering is to silence the "harmful" criticism in spite of all doubts and to set an example to the units in such a way that the subordinate units just cannot help but follow and fight unconditionally. I have seen very many soldiers even at that time who carried and radiated this strength.

On the basis of my several years of experience as a German army commander in the face of British and American opponent, who was superior in everything, I saw confirmed the insight already gained in World War I that the purely local defense of the main battle line, as ordered by Hitler, whether inland or on the coast, did not bring the expected defensive success compared with the combined material deployment of army, air force and navy. Given Hitler's own weakness on the ground and in the air, such a battlespace was not enough. One had to be able to fight in "limited movement warfare" for holding a space to be determined in advance.

My optimism already limited by the introductory lectures at headquarters in Berlin, faded after the first visits to the front. At that time, however, I do not believe the Saar-Palatinate and the Lower Rhine would be lost so outrageously quickly. As a result of the fighting and evasive movements of the army groups, I expected the attacking enemy armies to gradually wear down as well, which could lead to shorter or longer standstill of enemy operations line Weser - Werra - Main - Altmühl - Lech. Example: It was up to the supreme command to exploit this situation sensibly. With this, I would have considered the task of the Commander-in-Chief West to be fulfilled in terms of time and space.

Years of antagonism between the Supreme Commander German Air Forces and the German Army leadership became increasingly apparent. An irreconcilable distrust had a paralyzing and in some places

disintegrating effect. As a result, the army leadership felt gagged and not understood. Failures, on the other hand, were attributed to the poor will of the army commanders; Hitler's multiple interventions in even the smallest tactical actions were described as alien to the troops, his operational orders and views as amateurish. This latent state of war was the grave of initiative, impaired unified leadership and expended energies in the wrong place.

Operational or tactical views had undergone a damaging change in world war theater.

The tremendous losses of the last six months and the constant unsuccessful retreat battles had caused a dangerous state of fatigue among the leadership and the troops. Some of the leaders were worn out, others were in poor health, and still others were unable to cope with their positions. Influence from above only possible to a limited extent in view of the persistent combat loads and the difficult connections.

Strengths were unsatisfactory, replacements were available but came to the front insufficiently trained, inexperienced in combat, late and dripping. Combat tactical exploitation was correspondingly poor. The lack of subordinate leaders was dangerous.

Cohesion in the troops was only good where an understanding leader enough NCOs experienced in the front and a larger core of old men. These were the units that could be relied upon and that formed the backbone of the whole battle and performed admirably. In such units, even the high-minded recruits became old warriors in a very short time, with all the qualities that distinguished the German soldier in his prime. The troops were - to put it briefly - the reflection of their leaders.

The excessive number of "dispersed" behind the front suggested that such formations were no longer numerous. The dispersed were an absolute danger as a source of infection and a hindrance to traffic; they were at the same time a reservoir. There were many "real" displaced persons who had strayed from the troops or, assigned to the front from the military hospitals and replacement battalions, could not find their front-line units despite commendable efforts. In addition, there were shirkers who wanted to stay far away from the firing line; these were in the majority. Under the first impression of the conditions behind the front, organizationally what was possible was done. The armies and army groups set up lines of interception one behind the other. They could not bring about a thorough improvement, since the lines were too wide-meshed. A "Feldjäger command" made them denser. During the breakthroughs at the end of March, the initially widely

spaced lines of interception had come too close to the front, had been endangered, and had begun to move. The briefing on the situation and the briefing; of the postings cost time, all the more the worse the intelligence links became. Change could only be created by the fact that the Commander-in-Chief of the Feldjäger Command, General der Flieger Speidel, formerly a very good Army General Staff Officer - my former Chief of Staff of Luftflotten 1 and 2 - was assigned to the overall handling of this service with the Commander-in-Chief West; he placed the respective pick-up lines so far behind the front that the postings could work for a longer time and then with success in one place. Behind breakthrough gaps, the posts were supplemented by officer patrols

supply of weapons and equipment did not even meet the minimum requirements. The full demand could not be met at all; the available stocks were partly in the ordnance offices at home; the fact that they did not arrive at the front was due to distribution as well as to the transport situation and incomprehensible interventions.

organizational and replenishment measures came too late in very many cases

subordination of the military districts could not be achieved until mid-March 1945; earlier subordination would have made possible a scheduled collection of replacement troop units etc., and supplies, and their delivery to the danger points of the front, before all conditions for an economical use of men and material had been shattered

The requests for the supply of troops were "processed" until the breakdowns that had occurred in the meantime at the front triggered an immediate decision, which then had to be carried out in the greatest haste and under the most difficult conditions. This is how the approach of the division from Denmark, the division "Danube" and the armored units "Westphalia" and "Thuringia" took place."

This "too late" wove like a thread through the overall events on the battlefield and was an undeniable fault of the highest leadership; the fault would have been negated if the homeland services "exhausted" in the truest meaning of the word. That this was not the case, I have repeatedly been able to ascertain personally.

In the tactical field, the following deficiencies had a particularly detrimental effect on combat success: the insufficient use of terrain for defense, the lack of practical knowledge in the conduct of stalling combat, the inadequate reaction to surprising changes in the situation and the high-handed attitude toward orders from above

Operation" had become the catchword of the German leadership, even of those who had never had anything to do with operations in the former classical sense, but who believed they could interpret into this mysterious word everything they considered desirable, right or necessary from their smaller or larger circle of vision

The decline of the Air Force, which had been apparent for years, could no longer be expected to produce the required performance. Even coming from the Air Force, the easily detectable deficiencies depressed me all the more, because I could not eliminate them. The Army's constant criticism that aviation was failing and doing nothing was wrong. Certainly - more inspiring personalities at the head of the aviation units could have perhaps brought out a little more. The flying leadership task consisted in the rapid gathering of all airmen to the respective priority target; for this, the agility of the airmen in leadership and deployment was no longer available. It might also have been more expedient to eliminate the division of the air forces into three air divisions, combine them into a large unit capable of command and control and to employ this concentrated force in the center of gravity without regard to the requests of the disadvantaged front. This was correct to merge the front-line divisions with the homeland fighter divisions in order to get "some mass" in hand again in this way. But - the tasks that came to the fighter pilots were too many-sided. Even if the flak corps under their leaders (Generals of Flak Bogatsch, Pickert and Schilffahrt) achieved unheard-of feats, they had to fail more and more in air defense the more they were used in ground defense.

The party had been active in the quiet times, in many places too active; it had developed from a political organization into a distinctly supervisory organization of the size of the party apparatus, many high officials had risen to positions for which they had had no preliminary training and did not meet the requirements in terms of character. The instinct for activity, inherent in almost every German, was expressed to a special degree in the sovereigns. This was ensured by the head of the Party Chancellery, Bormann, whose endeavor it was to prove the vital justification and vital necessity of this surveillance institute by frequent reports to Hitler. It took strong personalities to withstand this pressure from above. There were such, especially among the younger generation; on the whole, however, the party's surveillance of the population and the Wehrmacht, as well as its reporting to Hitler, shattered the willingness to cooperate and gradually caused intolerable friction and disgruntlement among the commandos and the troops.

As "Reich Defense Commissars," the Gauleiters also had military duties. In this direction, they cooperated with the military district commands; they also had the right to intervene in the administration and economy. The antagonisms and frictions outweighed the good.

Since Oberbefehlshaber West could only maintain the necessary close contact with the numerous Gauleiters via the party leadership, but the long route via the party leadership did not allow for quick action, a high party functionary with extensive powers was seconded to the staff of Oberbefehlshaber West. This had a beneficial effect until a "wild" party man challenged the cooperation. I could not use informers on my staff. The necessary purge took place without objection.

On the other hand, the cooperation with a special representative of the Ministry of Propaganda proved to be satisfactory in every way; he also informed me continuously about initiated promising cease-fire efforts or peace feelers.

The already mentioned military tasks concerned the construction of roadblocks, the development of rear positions by providing workers, entrenchment equipment, material and the organization of the "Volkssturm".

Undoubtedly, in the aforementioned three directions the party worked with a lot of passion, but unfortunately not always in a militarily correct way.

position extension was under military direction; the cooperation of population to be particularly acknowledged.

The Volkssturm was a stillborn child; from the beginning I had seen in it more a propagandistic purpose. If it was to have military value, formation, training, equipment and deployment had to be in military hands, i.e. in the hands of the Wehrkreiskommandos. It was not to depend on the number of units, but solely on their quality, i.e. their operational capability. They were not suitable for mobile use. Only a few battalions could be considered operational. distribution of the field-ready men among the army units would have been the happiest solution.

The population has done an exemplary job under the most difficult circumstances. History will hardly be able to show a similar example. Nevertheless: it was - which is no wonder - internally finished. The party no longer had any influence, for reasons which would go too far to state; the military leaders could not take over this task - the army was the sufferer. lack of active support not mean a failure militarily; it was to be endured. contrast, indirect support of the enemy was sometimes observed, and direct support, cost the blood of German soldiers.

main effort in the preparations for western defense in peacetime had been placed expansion of the Westwall and the air defense zone behind it. These positions had not fulfilled the cherished expectations; they were now in enemy hands.

Even the strongest natural obstacle behind it, the Rhine, had fallen partly by surprise and partly by combined earth and air attack.

For months, increasingly since March 1945, positions had been built up in the deep zone of the homeland, the defensive capability of which was only reasonably sufficient for the stalling defense if they were placed behind strong natural sections. These were available in abundance. The number of positions or sections was in inverse proportion to the number of units and their strength. This was a great danger; on the other hand, the large number of sections, staggered one behind the other at tolerable distances, was a prerequisite for the infantry units to hold their own against the enemy's motorized units. The enemy had the initiative; he chose the direction of advance. Since a continuous German occupation was no longer possible, there was a danger of maneuvering out of individual sections. The mobile forces were lacking for decisive countermeasures.

My relationship to Adolf Hitler and OKW

Thanks to my long service in Berlin and my membership of the army and air force, I knew all the key personalities. That made the work easier. Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring had given us Luftwaffe field marshals - I can say this without hesitation - a special position.

Since the Reichsmarschall himself represented the Luftwaffe's interests to the outside world during the buildup, we had little direct contact with Hitler; all the more so with the leading figures of the OKW. This remained so during the first campaigns. The Mediterranean and Western theaters of war were so-called "OKW theaters of war" that had nothing to do with the Army High Command.

As commander-in-chief in the south and at the end of the war in the west, I had to work almost exclusively with Hitler and the OKW. After various fluctuations, I had found full confidence since the middle of 1944, which was certainly the reason for my transfer to the West. In the Italian theater of war I had gained the greatest freedom in leadership; in the West it was inevitably curtailed by the situation in the East. I visited Hitler four times from March 10 to April 12, 1945, and found much understanding for my concerns. Despite the great setbacks, I never received any reproach,

certainly out of the feeling that the situation in the West was too far advanced for a thoroughgoing improvement.

Hitler received my lectures at all hours of the night, he listened to what I had to say without interrupting me, showed the greatest understanding for the questions I raised, and almost without exception decided in the sense of my lecture. His mental vigor was in striking contrast to his physical condition. In his decisions he was shorter than before and showed me an almost conspicuous care and consideration. Twice he put his car with his personal driver at my disposal for the return trip, whereby he gave the driver far-reaching rules of conduct. A change from the respectful, polite treatment I had received earlier to such obvious care and incompressible novelty for me, since I had always had only a purely official relationship with Hitler and saw the gap between the high leaders of the Wehrmacht and him growing ever wider.

Hitler never made any demands on me that would have been contrary to my official views, and I never made a private request of him. I can only attribute these conspicuous demonstrations of trust to the fact that Hitler knew of me, that I associated with him without any ulterior motives and that for years I sacrificed more than my working hours for the tasks assigned to me.

Out of his pathological distrust - in the end actually more or less against everyone - Hitler took over by doing all Reich business himself. In the selection of his personal environment he had an unfortunate hand. Both also had an unfavorable effect on the Wehrmacht and warfare.

Even on April 12, 1945, at my last lecture to Hitler, he had an optimistic view: to what extent he was acting is difficult to fathom. In retrospect, I would like to say that he virtually obsessed with the idea of some possibility of rescue, that he clung to it like a drowning man to a straw. I think he certainly believed in a successful fight in the East, he believed in his 12th Army being formed, in various new weapons and perhaps also in the collapse of the enemy coalition.

All these assumptions were wrong; from the beginning of the Russian attack Hitler, more and more self-contained and isolated, lived only in an unreal world.

The officer in charge of the OKW theaters of war was Colonel General Jodl, with whom it was a pleasure to work. Clever, operationally and tactically above average, he was the given man for such a post, especially since he was a calm, sober and tireless worker. More front-line experience would have been desirable to him. He had a very difficult position, since

Hitler was very difficult to influence and a certain antagonism between the General Staff of the Army High Command and the Command Staff of the OKW made unified influence on Hitler difficult. Those who judge Jodl do not know what he prevented and reined in. His critics must first prove that they would have done better under the given circumstances; whether that would have been possible at all I leave undecided. As the chief of the Wehrmacht staff, he put himself before the OKW, even if this meant that he to cover up views and measures that he had fought relentlessly to change or improve. Jodl's associates, such as General v. Buttlar, were trained objective general staff officers who promoted understanding cooperation. Jodl's spirit was seldom in differences of opinion between myself and Jodl in the assessment of the situation and the measures to be inferred from it. He always supported me and my staff.

I less to do Field Marshal Keitel as Commander-in-Chief South, Southwest and West. The directives he issued about deployments or supplies were based on Führer orders, which could be argued against but not changed. Hitler, for example, saw the reorganization of divisions as the fundamental prerequisite for continuing the war; personnel and material had to be held back for them. I, on the other hand, was of the opinion, along with many other generals, that reorganization itself was uneconomical and that in the final period of the war tactical successes rather than to organize. The struggles in the Central German region

With the confinement of Army Group B in the Ruhr cauldron, the fate of the central German region was sealed.

The operational objectives of the Allies could be identified; forces were sufficiently available to achieve the operational objectives with certainty, despite the diversions for the confinement army of the Ruhr fortress. The question of enemy center of gravity had been recognized but had become quite indifferent, since neither mobile forces nor air forces were available to attack them with success. I call this period the "campaign of improvisations," in which the good will, leadership and the troops - that is, the moral elements - were decisive.

It was clear that this space, some 250 kilometers wide, could not be defended by makeshift units. The widely dispersed forces fighting in this area had the task of delaying the enemy's advance until a stronger, organically grown fighting force could provide the assistance indispensable for a promising campaign. This could only be the 12th Army, which was formed from the

end of March. Only with its help could a certain security be given for a course of events in the East that would not be disturbed from the West, and a tearing of Germany in two halves could be avoided.

The importance of the 12th Army for the west and the overall operations gave conditions for the conduct of the fight in the west that were indispensable; no matter how the conditions might develop, in the Harz Mountains the 12th Army could make itself available for any task. This meant of course, keeping the Harz and a certain apron open so as not to use up prematurely the still weak forces even in the most favorable case by fighting the exit from the mountains. Harz also met the requirements in terms of camouflage. The OKW directive of the end of March to keep the Harz clear for this purpose also corresponded to my views. At that moment, I did not consider the question of whether the outcome of the war could be influenced by this. There was no need to worry about this any longer. I merely tried, with all the means at my disposal, to prolong the struggle forward of the Harz Mountains until the eastern operations could mature. early April, I pointed out the necessity of reinforcing the occupation of and the link between the Harz and the Elbe was to be kept open by forces of the 12th Army. The infusion of the "Potsdam" Division was due to this. The attack of a combat group of the XXXIX Panzer Corps (Decker) from the Ülzen area on 16 April also pursued the same purpose, albeit abundantly late. With its weakness, it had to be left in the deep space in front of the Harz Mountains. The 12th Army attack to be coupled with it did not get out of the Dessau bridgehead at all.

It was clear from the outset that a delay in enemy action could only be forced in the section-rich terrain between Teutoburg Forest-Spessart and into the Harz-Thuringian Forest line.

Upon reaching the open terrain on both sides of the Harz Mountains, I did not expect anything more. The establishment of defenses on the Saale and Elbe rivers was undoubtedly possible; however, both rivers were already in the East's zone of radiation, which was best indicated by the emplacement buildings on these rivers - front to the East. My mission to keep the rear clear for the East, to create a base for the 12th Army west of the Elbe and help Army Group B, was then impossible to fulfill.

Inevitably, the weak German forces retreated to the Harz Mountains and the Thuringian Forest, since it was believed that resistance could there be even with weak forces. In addition, the Harz as the base of the 12th Army and the Thuringian Forest because of its industry were to be held according to orders. What I would hardly have dared to assume, that

strong American force groups would allow themselves followed into the mountains by the weak troops became reality. It is certainly dangerous under normal conditions to conduct a decisive operation between two mountains 80 to 100 kilometers apart or even flanked by a mountain range. However, the weakness of the German forces in the western central front was well known, so that such an operation could have been carried out without risk, especially since any flank effect could be crushed by providing mobile observation forces and by air dominating air forces. Thus, however, AOK 7 and AOK 11 drew strong forces upon themselves and delayed the American advance. This resulted in opportunity to deploy the 12th Army. Other reasons may have been involved, such as inter-Allied political agreements, supply difficulties, consideration for German divisions scattered throughout the area. It is certain, however, is that not all opportunities were exploited as they have been, i.e. that the defensive battles in the east, which were decisive for the war, could be placed without the armies of the Western Allies threatening the rear.

In the days of April, my command posts were located behind the centers of gravity of the front and within range of Berlin. Despite these favorable days, communications with the wings became more and more difficult and the routes to the headquarters of the army groups longer and more dangerous. With the departure of Army Group B from the front and the opening up of the front in the central German area, two separate theaters of war no longer required unified front command. In accordance with the Fuehrer's order, command situation in the west was therefore reorganized on April 6, 1945, and the "Commander-in-Chief Northwest" was appointed for the German northwest area, whose left combat strip boundary as of April 12 was the line Hameln (NW) - Braunschweig (NW) Magdeburg (West). The front south of this line remained under my command.

In these days (early April) I was informed of a command arrangement which was to come into effect when the theaters of war northwest, south and east could no longer be centrally commanded. According to this arrangement, I, as "Commander-in-Chief South" with a small OKW staff under Lieutenant General Winter, was to assume the supreme command and executive authority in the entire southern area including Italy, Yugoslavia and the southern part of the Eastern Front, while the same task in the north was to fall to Grand Admiral Dönitz with the Wehrmacht command staff. In this arrangement, it remained open where Hitler wanted to go. It is most interesting about this intended division of command that two soldiers were given leadership, while

Goering, who had been seen as Hitler's successor, and the party had been eliminated

On April 8, 1945, the Harz Mountains were declared a fortress by the OKW and the 11th Army was charged with their defense. The 7th Army fought on the right wing with improvised troops from Gotha, Erfurt, Weimar; its left wing corps was pushed more and more to the southeast from the Thuringian Forest to the right wing of the 1st Army. The necessary battle-strip changes resulted in the orientation of the armies valid for the final phase: 7th Army in central Germany with front to the west, 1st and 19th Armies in southern Germany with front to the northwest and west

While Allied tanks were already appearing in front of Magdeburg on April 12 and the battle for the Thuringian Forest was nearing its end, fighting was still going on for the Harz Mountains; this battle ended on April 20 with the capture of AOK 11. In the middle of this part of the front from Magdeburg to Riesa, the 12th Army had in the meantime established itself on the Elbe, also fighting for possession of this section of the river. At the conclusion of this period, a new front had been established on the Elbe trough, closing the gap on the Elbe that had been torn open on the Rhine in mid-March. In the interaction of the enemy attacks on the German eastern and western fronts the fate of this front also to be fulfilled

23.

THE END OF THE WAR

Timetable: 21.4.1945 Collapse of the German front in Italy -...

25.4.1945 Unification of American and Soviet Russian troops at Torgau on the Elbe - 28.4.1945 Plenipotentiaries of Army Group C sign armistice in Caserta, initially not announced -

28.4.1945 Shooting of Mussolini - 30.4.1945 Fall of Munich -

31.4.1945 Suicide of Hitler in Berlin - Reich President: Grand Admiral Dönitz -

2.5.1945 Capitulation of Army Group C comes into effect -.

4.5.1945 Surrender of Army Group G near Munich - 5.5.1945 Surrender of Ob Northwest - 7.5.1945 Surrender of Ob South (Kesselring) - 7.5.1945 2.41 a.m. Signing of the total surrender of the German Wehrmacht in Reims -

9.5.1945 00:01 Entry into force of the overall capitulation.

South Germany

accordance with my view that the fate of the last phase of the war and thus of the war in general would be decided in the central zone of the German Reich, I paid special attention to events in the center, deliberately neglecting the wing army groups. If the Russians and the Western Allies shook hands on the Elbe or near Berlin, the situation on the wings, however favorable it might be, had become meaningless. From this moment on, the continuation of the war could only have its inner justification, but also its compelling necessity, to enable German divisions deployed in the east to fight back the British-American zone, gaining time. The means for this could be different.

As already explained, the situation in the Central German area could only be influenced by the intervention of the newly formed 12th Army. For a long time the Commander-in-Chief West was not informed of the real conditions of the somewhat ghostly 12th Army, which was described in the brightest colors. In verbal and telephone conversations, Hitler, somewhat more moderately by the general staff officers of the OKW leadership staff, pointed to this army as a "deus ex machina" as the situation more and more worrisome. As soon as I realized that this miracle army could not be deployed in time even if only locally, to rectify the situation in Central Germany, I felt I had to turn my increased attention to the situation in Southern Germany, which was coming to a head, and on April 10 I moved my headquarters to the Upper Palatinate.

What was the situation in southern Germany at the end of March? The Americans' crossing of the Rhine at Oppenheim and the follow-up operations against the right wing of Army Group G had opened the way for the enemy to the NE, in the direction of Giessen, Hersfeld, to the east via Aschaffenburg and Miltenberg toward Würzburg, and to the southeast, tearing open the Miltenberg-Eberbach chord position, into the open and little-protected space eastward of the Odenwald toward Crailsheim-Nuremberg.

South and southwestward of there, American forces with their main thrust Heidelberg had reached the Rhine plain south and southeast of Mannheim and Heidelberg. The northward shift of French forces from their southern Palatine attack strip was joined by the Rhine crossing of the 3rd Algerian Division and the 2nd Moroccan Division between Speyer and Germersheim in late March. These divisions proceeded in close alignment American forces in a southeasterly direction, clearing the Rhine valley to facilitate the 9th Colonial Division and the 5th French Panzer Division.

The operational picture of the enemy confirmed more and more the basic idea of the warfare in the German southern area, which had already become apparent on March 25: opening this area from the north. This was associated with the following advantages for the enemy:

The crossing of the Rhine could take place, on the whole, in an area already secured by the Allied forces.

The difficult frontal attack against the mountain fronts and river barriers with its necessary high casualties was avoided.

The left wing of the American 7th Army operating in southern Germany remained in communication, albeit loose, with the American 3rd Army advancing to its left

Once chosen, the center of gravity could be maintained without damaging tactical warfare; it was also operationally correct.

This operational insight, however, could not compensate for the lack of any operational capability on the German side. In southern Germany at that time there was a Panzer Grenadier Division (17th SS), which, having been newly refreshed, also had to prove itself first. With such an "intervention" division, it was not possible to bridge a space some 300 kilometers wide; all the less so since the infantry divisions were also far from being up to par, and the other numerous forces, such as replacement battalions, Volkssturm, schools, were completely absent as fillers for operational use. The only thing in this battle space that benefited the German command was the terrain with its numerous sections. But even here, the defenses behind river sections (Main) and mountains (Odenwald) had not held what was expected. In part, the forces had been caught in the movement, which completely eliminated them. Therefore, the aim was to occupy a position in time and then try to defend it to be able to choose the most favorable moment to change positions from a longer period of fighting. This meant fighting behind the preferred terrain sections, not just movement. But still: At least the left wing of the 1st Army and the 19th Army were in positions ready for defense, the 19th Army mainly in the right place, at the northern edge of the Black Forest; there - even under deliberate weakening of the Black Forest western front - all somehow available forces had to be supplied. The fact that in the course of these shifts on the baseline, frontal positions that appeared to be less vulnerable were overstretched, provoked an enemy attack and could be broken through, could not be called erroneous; the tactics of emphasis justified this; moreover, most of the weakened frontal positions had a high natural strength, so that they could also be defended with weaker forces. It had to be known, however, that in the long run one could not withstand a victory-

conscious enemy with forces inferior numbers, training and equipment

In order to give this sectional warfare a modest chance of success, many individual orders and measures had been taken in the fortificatory and organizational field. Defensive positions are supported by artillery and other heavy weapons. But it was precisely this that was lacking.

Without going into the individual events of the day, I will highlight the tactical periods that seem important to me with their crisis points.

The breaking of the sinew position between the bend of the Main near Miltenberg and Eberbach, together with the forcing of the Main near Aschaffenburg, was the prelude to two important enemy operations. It opened the way to Würzburg (April 1-7, 1945) and from there to Bamberg (April 15) - Nuremberg and directly past Mergentheim to Nuremberg (April 16-20).

tactical behavior of the enemy showed no change from earlier; the armored divisions probed in broad and deep space opening way for the following infantry divisions under sometimes remarkably rapid massing of the main forces. The all-too-wide advance of the armored forces had become exception in this period and in this space. Nevertheless, if the sporadically fighting enemy armored elements could not be stopped or forced to turn, the broken or bypassed German section could no longer be held as a whole, since the German defenses, with their lack of depth, could not simultaneously withstand frontal attacks a second wave of the enemy and tank attacks by the first wave from the flank or even from the rear.

In the rapid shift of divisions from the left wing of the 1st Army to the breakthrough wing, a remarkable agility of the leadership of Army Group G and 1st Army was demonstrated. From the rear, forces arrived too late-even for the Tauber-Jagst position. With the troops available, even enemy advance guarding could not be stopped.

The opening of the Tauber front finally cleared the way east and northeast toward Würzburg and Schweinfurt. The various attempts of Wehrkreis XIII to take the offensive against the 12th American Panzer Division crossing the Main at Ochsenfurt remained such. The defensive flank taken by the North Wing on March 28 in line Unter- Wittighausen - Grünsfeld - Lauda - Mergentheim with front to the north was a questionable tactical maneuver or a poor standoff. The folding back into the new west-east front widened the gap already created by the LXXXII AK's fighting, prepared the final separation of the 1st Army from the 7th Army, and opened the way for the 7th American Army to move comprehensively on Bamberg-Nuremberg.

This pressure also weighed on the OKW, which on 3 April ordered the new commander-in-chief Army Group G, General d. Inf. Schulz, to provide a strong assault group behind the right wing of the 1st Army under General Tolsdorff, who had also been reassigned and had an excellent record, in order to cut off the enemy group advancing on Würzburg in the advance to the north and to establish contact with the LXXXII AK. This order was not feasible and was rescinded by me with the subsequent consent of the OKW. This example, like the similar case with Army Group H (offensive order to Generaloberst Student), proves that maps and reports can never replace personal insight and that wishful thinking overgrows real conditions.

In our view, the rapid progress on the Main had been due to the

12. American Army Group gave the impetus to turn the divisions fighting west and south of the Thuringian Forest, especially the 11th and 14th Armored Divisions, to the southeast to cover and reinforce the American left wing hanging in the air. The 3rd American Army could be weakened without jeopardizing the Allied operational objective in central Germany.

On the left wing of the 1st Army, the divisions of the XIII and LXXX AK, yielding to enemy pressure, had to fall back to the Jagst and Neckar-Enz positions, then to the Kocher (10 April); the cohesion, however, was maintained; after reaching these sections, a calming of the situation even occurred, if only for a short time. On 10 April the 1st Army, in its reorganization after various surrenders to the 7th and 19th Armies, stood in the line Pricksenstadt-Uffenheim-Niederstetten-Ingelfingen-Kocher, with the right wing generally on the western edge of the Steigerwald. Shifts of three divisions from the left wing of the 1st Army and the right wing of the 19th Army into the endangered Nuremberg area weakened the Neckar-Enz position, which in itself was operationally important, and the Kocher position, which had become of equal importance in connection with the Neckar position; but these were so strong both in nature and in fortification that no immediate danger need have arisen as a result. The only regret was that the three divisions that had been withdrawn reached their new battle space very late and were unable to have the effect that was to be expected given the quality of these divisions.

The necessity of these shifts was to be underscored by the events immediately following took place on the right wing of the Army. The sharp rearward thrust of the wing divisions of the 7th and 3rd American was not withstood by the worn-out divisions of the LXXXII AK; the 36th Volksgrenadier Division and 416th Infantry Division were blown to pieces in the Bamberg area. Bamberg and Bayreuth were overrun on April 15. The terrain south of

there lay open to enemy seizure.

To the west, movements were more orderly; cohesion was maintained. Around 14/T5. April there was fighting around the Aischgrund. Nuremberg magnetically attracted the forces of the U.S. 7th Army.

This development would have led to disaster if the 2nd Mountain Division had not been made available to the XIII SS-AK and the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division to the LXXXII AK at the very last minute. At the same time, replacement units and alert units could also be supplied to the almost shattered divisions (36th Volks-Grenadier-Division and 416th Inf.-Division) fallen back via Bamberg, so that these divisions, too, able to build up security, or rather a security veil, in a makeshift manner on 16/17 April south of the Reichsautobahn. Regrettably that a regiment of the 17th SS Division had to be surrendered for the defense of Nuremberg, the surrender of which temporarily created a gap between the LXXXII and XIII SS Corps, through which, as luck would have it, an American division leaked. To close the open flank - Franconian Switzerland and the northern Upper Palatinate as far as the Naab River - no forces except for a combat group on the Grafenwoehr training area. The Grafenwoehr forces (tanks and loaded infantry) were committed to a thrust into the flank of the 14th American Armored Division rolling toward Nuremberg from the direction of Bayreuth. I was on the spot to view the approach of the forces. The limited success of this flank thrust was not due to the absolute weakness of the troops. Lack of front-line experience, inadequate combat training, and eagerness to deploy were the main causes. Apart from the gap in the Upper Palatinate as far as the Naab, on April 18 and 19 there was a reasonable front from the area north of Amberg via Schwabach, Ansbach, Hall in the direction of Lauenburg.

With this achievement, the 1st Army had once again demonstrated its capability. Neither the leadership nor the troops could be blamed for the fact that the enemy succeeded in advancing a bridgehead across the Neckar on both sides of Heilbronn on April 14 and 15. That tanks and E battalions of Wehrkreis V - Württemberg-Schwaben - assisted in narrowing the bridgehead deserved recognition. But with the crossing of the Neckar the starting point had been created for a new and larger general enterprise, the thrust of which would probably be directed against the Dillingen-Ulm section of the Danube, taking advantage of the roads leading to the Danube. Measures against this were in progress.

The Neckar-Enz position and its advanced bar from Heilbronn to Pforzheim closed the gate of incursion between the Odenwald and the Black

Forest. A breakthrough through the Neckar front meant free movement in the favorable armored terrain north of the Swabian Alb, and an approach across the Enz threatened Stuttgart with the depression between the Black Forest and the Swabian Alb south as well as the Alb itself.

By the end of March 1945, it had already become apparent that the southern border of the American Army Group did not extend significantly beyond the Ludwigshafen-Heilbronn line. Accordingly, Baden and Württemberg fell to the French Army as an attack area.

On April 13, the French attack began from the Karlsruhe area against the position on the northern edge of the Black Forest, leading to deep penetrations in the direction of Wildbad and Herrenalb and a kind of enclosure of Pforzheim. April 18: The troops were no longer even capable of successfully resisting behind a strong section. Thus, any "movement" against such a mobile opponent had to be doomed to failure from the start. One could not ignore the fact that the 19th Army had only forces with which it was not possible to conduct a stalling defense. If the better-equipped corps (LXXXth and LXIVth Corps) already showed little resistance behind strong sections, what should be expected of the Landesschützen battalions, etc.? Finally, in the more open terrain, combat leadership culminated in rapid running. Despite the winged stride of a defeated force, the attackers were superior in tempo. The 19th Army's attempt to bring the enemy forces advancing eastward toward Pforzheim to a halt failed. It would have been more correct to follow the suggestion of the Commanding General of the LXIV AK and deploy the division with other forces brought in by the XVIII SS Corps to the Altensteig-Freudenstadt area in a kind of holding position. This might have avoided the dam slide that would have been the catastrophe for the LXXX. AK and parts of the LXIV AK.

The action of the American-French divisions from the Pforzheim area, which led into the Stuttgart area on 20 and 21 April, was complemented by the advance of American divisions eastward past Stuttgart. The link between the 1st and 19th Armies was thus severed. This left the LXXX. Army Corps and, with the advance of French armored division toward Villingen on 22 April, parts of the LXIV Army Corps and the XVIII SS Army Corps had also been placed in a difficult position. The Battle of Württemberg was lost when the troops showed in the first days of fighting that they were no match for the attacks on the Enz-Black Forest Barrier.

On April 24, the 19th Army, with its severely depleted forces, was on the Danube-Iller River and in the process of setting down on Kempten.

April 19 and 20 and the following days made the greatest mental and fighting demand on the overall leadership and troops in southern Germany; they were also decisive in shaping final events of the war.

On the right wing of the 1st Army, the first divisions of the 3rd American Army pushed the troop-empty area east of Franconian Switzerland, threatened Weiden - April 24 - and Neumarkt, and in the course of the next few days pushed into the Bohemian Forest with the 11th American Armored Division; they were in the Regen, Zwiesel, and Cham area between April 26 and May 3. The Naab defenses of General der Infanterie Weisenberger were shattered or pushed back.

The divisions of the LXXXII Army Corps were also pushed back, partly broken through and finally taken up by the pioneers of the Army Pioneer School in the Regensburg bridgehead north of the Danube and by the SS "Nibelungen" Division left following south of the Danube.

The XIII SS Corps had to follow, was also breached at various points but while maintaining connections within the corpsable to fight its way back behind the Danube and establish a new defensive line building four bridgeheads between Ingolstadt and Donauwörth.

It was against the left wing corps of the 1st Army (XIII Army Corps) that the decisive attack was directed on April 19, tearing open the front between Crailsheim and Backnang at various points and giving the American divisions a path to the Danube between Dillingen and Ulm. The German combat groups were nevertheless able to form a large bridgehead west of Dillingen, from which they were able to flow across the Danube on April 24 and move to the defense west of Dillingen as far as Ulm. The enemy surprise success at Dillingen on April 23 and the turning in of two to three American divisions on and over Ulm were to be the undoing of this gallant battle group.

All these events were overshadowed by the fact that on April 20 the Russians had succeeded in crossing the Oder on a broad front. This situation was taken into account in terms of command on April 24 by the establishment of the OKW South Germany Command Staff under General of the Mountain Troops Winter; it later joined me as a working staff in my capacity as Commander-in-Chief South.

The enemy's behavior had shown no significant changes from the previous weeks. Although in the last third of April the American armored divisions had dropped the temporary cautious effort and made deep raids into the Bohemian Forest, along the Danube, and against Lake the effort of the upper command bring the divisions of the second meeting up to the same

level and to maintain cohesion on the larger remarkable so that local setbacks were avoided from the outset Here again, as in Africa and Italy, the French divisions had demonstrated their agility in mountain warfare, which the German leadership could no longer counter with equivalent forces.

Knowing the weakness of the German force, its inadequate training, equipment, and mobility, a more reckless push after and immediate penetration of the gap between the 7th and 1st Armies (northern Bavaria) might have led the Allies to more rapid success The idea underlying the breakthrough of the 10th American Armored Division was a tactical finesse that, carried out just as vigorously, could have had the very greatest impact on the 1st Army. The advance of the 12th American Panzer Division against Dillingen also betrayed genuine tank spirit, which - unexpectedly for me - seemed to subside after the Danube had been overcome.

Battle for cities

On April 2, 1945, Hitler had ordered that all cities were to be defended. This order undoubtedly sprang from the unswerving belief that everyone would sacrifice the last to escape an uncertain fate, and that everyone would also still share this belief. If that in itself was a delusion, this order was militarily vulnerable and in part unenforceable. Militarily, it came down to wearing down the enemy's fighting force and delaying action. This required field troops; the Volkssturm was not enough. The urbanized area alone did not do it either. Local defense required a high level of tactical skill, training, and combat discipline, as well as terrain that lent itself to defense and could not be bypassed. All this was only given in a few cases on the outskirts of the city; this alone made it necessary to bring command the right measure. Incidentally - the Western campaign is the best proof of this - in accordance with my orders, fighting was not in the cities, but around the cities. Where the fighting finally took place was determined by the terrain, the type and condition of the troops and the combat mission. It was in this sense that the decision was made or acted upon. Ludwigshafen, Kassel, Eisenach, Schweinfurt, Nuremberg, Munich are eloquent examples.

the battle for Würzburg was under the impression of the immediately preceding Fuehrer order; this battle was militarily indefensible. The impetus for this was given by the Gauleiter. §§§)

§§§ This description contradicts a "factual report" come to me but corresponds to the report I received at the time

The defense of Schweinfurt, which I monitored closely, was set far away from the city and was based on the ring positions provided by the numerous anti-aircraft batteries. Once this outer ring was breached, the defenses and the work in the ball-bearing works ceased of their own accord.

The battle for Nuremberg was also to be fought in front of the city and on the outskirts, according to orders. For the sake of the nimbus of the city "of the Reich Party Rallies," the Gauleiter deviated from this and continued the fight longer at the risk of his life. He did not achieve any military success. After all: Nuremberg tied up more enemy forces than could be expected and than was necessary. Incidentally, I witnessed a bombing raid in Nuremberg on April 16 during my trip to Army High Command 1 and Army Group G and saw the overall damage in the city itself. Not much could be destroyed even by fighting in the city, regrettable and unnecessary as it was.

The defense of Munich, the "capital of the movement," demanded by the Gauleiter, I twice very firmly refused.

Even where the tactical situation demanded the sustained defense of a city, there could be no question of defense being carried out according to Adolf Hitler's orders. I am not aware of a single case.

The bridge blasts

Remagen, Hanau, and Aschaffenburg were convincing examples of the adverse consequences of not blowing up bridges in time during wartime. These experiences and Hitler's multiple draconian orders did not improve anything. Despite the securing of the Danube front, despite advance warning, on April 23 the Danube bridge at Dillingen fell unharmed hands of the 12th American Panzer Division. It was no different in other places. The carelessness that was expressed in this was as much an indication of the inability of some soldiers of the last waves of formation as of the overstraining of the substance as a whole. This was also connected with the lack of discernment between the important and the unimportant, which in some places became apparent in the thoughtless blowing up of all bridges. The Wehrkreis VII and other services worked for the preservation of various economically important bridges, which could not be denied a certain military importance. I blocked such bridges for blasting, but made the local leadership responsible for other securing measures. Such means existed enough; they were sometimes more effective than blasting.

The alpine fortress

When I was informed order to defend "Alpine Fortress" in my then headquarters Motzenhofen (north of Munich) on about April 20, 1945 I tried to get a clear picture about this. A great deal has been written about the Alpine fortress, most of it false.

The southern edge of the Alps, with an extended flank against Switzerland, had been developed at the time I was commander-in-chief southwest and was still partly being developed.

There were security crews from the area of Gauleiter Hofer (Standeschützen), trained leaders and sub-leaders of my former army group C.

To the north and toward the northeast, no fortified terrain reinforcements were or underway around April 20

Ground troops, fortress troops for the defense of this front did not exist; they were not foreseen.

The battalions under General der Gebirgstruppe Feurstein, which were shifted northward by Oberbefehlshaber Südwest in the last days of April, had - as reported at the time, apparently not in accordance with the facts - internal German military tasks

The events of the last months of the war had brought many staffs and rear formations from the north, south, southeast, and east into the Alpine Reduit. This led to overcrowding in the area and to food difficulties. Evacuation was not possible under the conditions prevailing in April 1945.

The defense of the so-called Alpine fortress would have required distinct high mountain troops, which were not available. The mass of hawesers and home service units were mere cannon fodder. When, at the beginning of May, armies of Army Group South (Rendulic) wanted to retreat to the Alps and fight there to the end, it took me a long time to convince the commanders-in-chief of the armies of the impracticability of this undertaking. As I said, good high mountain troops were needed, which no longer existed in this area.

The stockpiling of foodstuffs as well as military supplies is said to have been entrusted to the administrative head of the SS, Obergruppenführer Pohl. Although he was supposed to have been in southern Germany, we could not find fact, as in the supply and aviation areas nothing had happened

purely military point of view, the Alpine fortress would only have had value if it had not only defended for its own sake, but not only tied down enemy forces in long-range lunge battles and in air attacks but also crushed by strong "main reserves" of all weapons. This was not possible; everything else was fanciful gimmickry!

The situation in mid-April 1945

The German western front was only patched up in the middle; this part of the front was dictated the law of action. The enemy was approaching the Elbe. The 12th Army had given the first signs of life and was struggling to eliminate or narrow the American bridgeheads on the Elbe in order to take over the Mulde defenses in the following days following the XC. AK and to take over the Elbe defenses. The two wing army groups were pushed further and further north and south without being able to form firm fronts. The South German armies fought tenaciously in the center to maintain their front, but could not prevent an encirclement of the outer right wing. Commander-in-Chief Northwest was burdened with Holland, fighting in a confined space to assert the North Sea coast with its major port cities.

In the east, the main attack had begun on April 16, leading to a breakthrough into "Greater Berlin" by April 20.

The rapid action of the 1st and 3rd American Armies after the halt in the first third of April was unambiguously aimed at seizing Saxony. Their action as far as the Elbe had to be expected all the sooner because the 1st American Army had already put out its feelers across the Elbe. In addition, however, the Elbe was a clear dividing line, which also prevented a perhaps inwardly undesirable too close mingling with the Russian formations. Forces of the 5th American Army were too weak to advance southward over the Ore Mountains into Czechoslovakia. For the rest, the Ore Mountains would have torn the army in two, which would then be difficult to lead from one high command. The 7th German Army standing in this area was therefore uninteresting for the moment. If anywhere, forces could be withdrawn from this space. Czechoslovakia was a sphinx; it also had its political face. It was possible that the German-Czech border was respected by the Americans as a Russian area of interest. Only the future could decide on this. No matter how things turned out, Saxony and the rear area of Czechoslovakia had to gain and more importance as the base of Army Group Center (Schörner). Subordination of the 7th Army fighting in these areas. Field Marshal Schörner was thus

On the other hand, the conditions at the northeast corner of Bavaria triggered grave fears. The mid-April advance on Bayreuth indicated that the enemy was willing to exploit the gaps south of the Fichtel Mountains. The 12th American Army Group was able to throw into Bavaria the divisions no longer urgently needed in central Germany and, in cooperation with the divisions of the 7th American, to prepare a Cannae for the forces of the 1st German Army in a rapid, all-out operation.

If the main American thrust was in the direction of Regensburg-Passau,

this front gained decisive importance because of the possibility of influencing the German Army Group South of the Eastern Front.

From the very beginning, the 12th Army found itself in an extraordinarily unsatisfactory situation. By surrendering two divisions, "Clausewitz" and "Schlageter", to Commander-in-Chief Northwest and one division, "Potsdam", to Commander-in-Chief West (11th Army), its fighting strength was weakened by one third. These surrenders were a concession to Commanders-in-Chief West and Northwest, since the 12th Army could not carry out its original task west of the Elbe. Initially, its tasks vis-à-vis American forces were clearly mapped out. Would the young units live up to expectations? If they were used and battered in the battles around the Elbe and Mulde rivers, they might not be sufficiently strong and combat effective for eventual use against the Russian armies. The events in the East cast their shadows on this complex of questions.

Would the American advance eastward across the Elbe with stronger forces? This was a question that was all the more difficult to answer because operations north and south of Magdeburg were apparently being conducted along different lines. If, on the German side, they believed could count on halt at the Elbe they also had to consider improbable. Would the 12th Army, before intervening in the east, be able to secure its rear by taking away the American Elbe bridgeheads? The commander-in-chief AOK 12 knew that he could not solve both tasks of fighting to the east and west; for him, if the eastern situation became combustible, the only solution was to throw all forces

While the main task for the entire Western Front up to April 20 was to keep the East's back clear for the decisive final battles with the Russians, which the OKW considered promising, the fighting on the entire Western Front after April 20 was based solely on the idea of enabling the Eastern armies to retreat into the American-British zone.

I could not share the view, even of the highest command authorities, that the Western Allies, realizing the danger of Bolshevism would break out and make a front against armies, although Roosevelt had been convinced of the underhandedness of Soviet policy by the conversations of Obergruppenführer Wolff with the Americans, which were also linked with my name

One could also hear the opinion that it would be right to end the war with the Western Allies immediately, before the last trump cards against the Soviets were played out. Some things could be said against this on the basis of political and military considerations, but the decisive factors for me were

psychological reasons What effect would the surrender of all German Western troops have on the German forces on the Eastern Front, who were in the final decisive battle? They would have felt abandoned and betrayed and would have looked forward desperately to a merciless future; they would have fallen into the hands of the Russians altogether, which was our highest obligation to avoid. How to achieve this was debatable. One thing we had to try to achieve was to buy time for the German Eastern forces to fight their way back into the zones reserved for the Western Allies, which were not difficult to recognize. The final events have shown how correct this was. It is not changed by the behavior of some Allied command posts, which subordinated human demands to the inter-Allied agreement and prevented German soldiers crossing the demarcation line or even handing them over to the Russians after crossing.

The pivots in central Germany—the Harz Mountains and the Thuringian Forest—which might have tied up even stronger forces for a longer period had fallen in the second third of April. The precipitating events in central Germany made it impossible for the 12th Army, which was in formation, to intervene according to plan from the Harz Mountains or in the plains that fronted the Harz Mountains to the north. The Western Front had moved so close to the Eastern Front in the second third of April that they interfered with each other, bringing almost insoluble tasks and severe friction for the German command. The space from which the fight was to be nourished, both materially and in terms of personnel, had become too narrow. This applied primarily to the area along the Elbe River from Magdeburg to the greater Dresden area, and then primarily to the area from Berlin to north of Tangermünde on the Elbe.

The divisions of the 3rd American Army turned southeast; it was only a matter of time before the first American forces north and south of the Danube entered the area of Army Group South (Rendulic) with the then inevitable consequences for that army group. The German divisions (2nd and 11th Panzer Divisions) deployed by Commander-in-Chief West against the 3rd American Army were unable to make the shift through the Bohemian area quickly enough to make the intended flank thrust against the Army Patton divisions rushing south. The blocking measures then ordered in cooperation with the forces of Army Group Rendulic in the southernmost part of the Bohemian Forest were tactically and technically objectionable in layout and execution therefore less than satisfactory.

This period also still showed examples of unbroken will to fight. These included the self-sacrificing support of the field troops by training divisions

on the Saale and Mulde rivers in mid-April, the successful repulse of the reconnaissance advances and attacks of the Russian Guards Cavalry Division end of April, the fight of the 11th Panzer Division around the Elster River from 15 to 18 April 1945 again showed itself in its best light etc.

Since the end of March, the division battle groups rescued from the collapse in the Rhine-Main area had more than 400 km eastward by the end of April. They marched, deployed, fought, were overrun, bypassed, defeated, were consumed and replenished to fight and march again. An achievement of the German soldier! Viewed soberly however, one had to conclude that the tremendous personnel commitment, despite its limitation, was and could be of all proportion to the success.

development of the situation in the north with Army Group H will only be touched since it was directly subordinate to the OKW as of 6 April. The improvement expected by Hitler had not occurred. He did not like the leadership of Generaloberst Blaskowitz; he believed he could achieve the elimination of a certain lethargy by calling in Generaloberst Student. Colonel General Jodl, discussing this question, said to Hitler: "And if you, my Fuehrer, send up 'ten students,' the situation will not be changed." With this he clearly expressed our view. On May 5, Field Marshal Busch (Commander-in-Chief Northwest) surrendered, and on May 6, 1945, Colonel General Blaskowitz surrendered in Holland. The Last Battles in Southern Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia ****)

The Russian breakthrough armies approached Berlin around the middle of the last third of April. While the decisive battle of the war was expected there, the American-English forces in central Germany a conspicuous passivity. One got the impression that they had finished their decisive operations on that front.

The fighting in southern Germany was also coming to an end. The 19th Army had been crushed; it stood with its remnants on the Danube and Iller. The Danube had been crossed by the enemy at two points. In conjunction with an enemy advance from the Ulm area, the left corps of the 1st Army (LXXX Army Corps) was threatened with encirclement and annihilation.

Weak American forces stood on the old Austrian border. Attempts by the Americans to advance north of the Danube across the Bohemian Forest into

**** These areas were under my influence and later leadership.

Czechoslovakia were to be regarded as mere hedging measures for their flank.

Commander-in-Chief Southwest (Army Group C Italy) had suffered such heavy losses in the battles south of the Po that rearward movements were hampered and the holding of the well-established southern Alpine position was

Commander-in-Chief Southeast (Army Group E Balkans) was in heavy fighting under already clearly indicated threat to his right wing; the evasion of Commander-in-Chief Southwest increased the threat to this wing from the Italian side

At Army Group South (Colonel General Rendulic, Austria) the fighting had subsided; substantial reserves were behind the front.

Army Group Center (Field Marshal Schörner, Czechoslovakia) had hard fighting on its right wing; its fears for the deep left flank were not unfounded.

The only intact large German force behind the front was the newly formed 12th Army, which, however, was deployed with considerable forces against the west. In terms of strength, threatened from two sides, it could not turn the tide. But still:

The Eastern Armies, including Commander-in-Chief Southeast and the 12th Army, still possessed considerable internal strength that made immediate concern unnecessary while Army Group C (Italy), Army Group G (Bavaria), and the 7th Army were on the verge of collapse

Was justification continuing the struggle under these circumstances?

Due to the crowding of the existing large units into a confined space, the German forces had become more than ever an indissoluble community of fate. One stood for the other or dragged it down with it. For example, the dissolution of the German front in southern Germany was bound to endanger decisively the remaining Army Groups south of the Alps Southwest, Southeast, and South. If Army Group C (Southwest) dropped out, meant end for Army Group G and increased immediate danger. Commander-in-Chief South

In terms of combat psychology, mood swings transmitted themselves invisibly and unimaginably quickly throughout the community of fate; much more so individual actions taken without regard to the totality. The greatest mental stresses were brought about by neglect of the most primitive duty of comradeship. For a decent soldier it was impossible to give up fighting when he knew that his comrade was in the last decisive battle. It was also unthinkable for him to give up or leave a position whose holding

entailed the being or not being of his comrades

Translated to the big picture, my thoughts revolved around these things in a heavy inner struggle. It was no longer a question of the struggle to achieve a decent peace. It was only a matter of fulfilling an indispensable duty of comradeship, not to let the German comrade fall into the hands of the Russians. For this reason and this reason alone, the continuation of the fight to the bitter end was necessary.

The question of its justification occupied me more and more during the last years of the war was clear to me that the possibility of mental influences subordinated troops stood or fell with the fact that the responsible leader gained a clear attitude to this question. Since Stalingrad, since the surrender of Tunis, "victory" had become impossible. It was useless to ponder whether the dice had been cast against us with the successful invasion of Normandy. Much more worrying than the Allied invasion success, which could have been avoided to such an extent was the collapse behind the German Western Front, which made even a draw desperate for the aftermath.

This was the reason why, since the fall of 1944, I had supported SS-Obergruppenführer Wolff's plan to establish contact with the Americans in Switzerland. As a soldier, I had come to the conclusion that at this point in the war, a debate to take place on the political level. To make it possible was the purpose of the negotiations.

Politically, the Allies never made a secret of the fact that they wanted to destroy Germany, especially National Socialism and "militarism", i.e., a large part of the people and its entire ruling class. The enemy propaganda made available to us was such that even the slightest hope of a personal and national survival was taken away. The face of the Allies' will to annihilation - which was announced in the formula "unconditional surrender" - there was only one way: sell one's own skin as expensively as possible, i.e. to fight as long and as intensively as possible in order to wear down the enemy and perhaps make him more willing to negotiate. Already once (1918) we had given up the fight and thus had to accept the pitiless dictate of Versailles. A repetition could not be expected of anyone.

Around April 20, 1945, the question of the justification for continuing to fight came to me again and even more urgently. The defensive battles in the east and west had not led to the desired success; Berlin was in danger. Once again, I decided in favor of "holding out."

The orders from the Führer's headquarters that reached me were so demanding and urgent that as a soldier one was not allowed to act

"independently". Hitler's orders last two months of the war were more and more imploringly to halt the Allied advance or to gain time "stalling fight" until on home soil in the East the certainly expected defensive success and the reorganization of an army - "the best of the best" - could create a balance and various new weapons, above all the "Volks-Jäger", could come into effect. Increased protection against enemy bomber forces alone had if not a turning point, a major impact on the war effort as Americans noted war after closely studying the German production that begun. Political intervention might then have brought about a viable peace solution after all.

The German front-line fighter, who had never trembled with a weapon in his hand, trembled in the true meaning of the word before capture by the Russians. The comrades in the East in their hour of destiny was impossible for any leader, but especially for me, who also shared responsibility the East from Dresden to the South. We had to fight to give Eastern armies time to escape to the English-American zone.

The urgent suggestion immediately made to the three subordinate eastern army groups enter into local negotiations with the Russians was rejected by all as completely futile. Late in the beginning of May, at a discussion in Graz, the armies of Army Group South demanded, for the same reason, the continuation of the fight, which I forbade by the clear order to move out westward rapid marches to the American zone.

After Hitler's death, Grand Admiral Dönitz took over the command as a soldier; he laid down guidelines for the conduct of the war in the first days after taking command. They contained the expressed will to come to peace as soon as possible, but without letting the German eastern fighters fall into Russian hands. This order coincided with my own pressing demands of conscience.

The fateful question of whether to continue fighting or to surrender can only be raised and decided by a body that has an overall view. If other personalities not responsible for this intervene, this can or must become to the detriment of the whole or of individual parts. This is to be expected inevitably, if by such a step connections are torn and neighbors are endangered. Such action betrays unjustifiable egocentric attitude or dangerous dilettantism. Immediately after assuming command of the southern war zone, I initiated the surrender of the forces engaged in combat against the Americans by radio message to Eisenhower after the surrender of the Commander-in-Chief Southwest on May 3, 1945, preparing the overall surrender of the German Wehrmacht for the Grand Admiral. In retrospect, too, I regard this conduct of mine as the only possible soldierly path.

The practical result was that many hundreds of thousands - unfortunately

not millions because of behavior of the Americans - of German soldiers from the Loehr, Rendulic and Schörner Army Groups alone were withdrawn from Russian grasp and in some cases released almost immediately after the armistice. Anyone who has seen or spoken to the soldiers who returned from Russian captivity will not be able to escape the conviction of the correctness of this action.

If the German leadership had been 'forced' to surrender at an inopportune moment the independent action of a single general, namely a moment when even slightest possibility of an improvement of the situation even political could still be seen or where decisive disadvantages for a part of the people could still be avoided, then this general would rightly have been called the traitor to the German cause and not only condemned before history. The example of Petain - Weygand speaks for itself.

In the case of such a capitulation, to justify oneself by saying that the conditions for the German people and for the individual have been eased was unreal even then. In view of the Yalta and Potsdam decisions and the later reality, this assumption can no longer be maintained by anyone. I need only refer to the voluntary surrender of individual units, brought no advantage either to the whole or to the individual. Perhaps a personal advantage would have accrued to the troop leader who had taken and carried out such a decision; sooner or later world opinion would have rightly condemned this opportunist.

The Alpine massif (not the fictitious "Alpine fortress") formed the backstop for Army Groups Southwest, Southeast, G and for parts of South. This final phase it could not be held in the long run, but certainly until the Eastern Army Groups had broken away from the Russian. The pace of the retreat was determined by which force group was most advanced and which was most dependent on movements of the others.

The withdrawal of the main forces from Army Group E (Southeast) through a narrow tube cost time; this movement could be made impossible by unfortunate events on its right wing and by the opening of a gap by retrograde movement of Army Group C (Italy). The right wing therefore had to be supplied with the necessary reinforcements and the measures of Army Groups C and E had to be coordinated.

Even more decisive for Army Group E (Balkans) was the behavior of Army Group South (Austria); too early a withdrawal, especially of the right wing of this Army Group, blocked Army Group E, which was thus at Tito's mercy.

An incursion into the front of Army Group Center (Czechoslovakia),

together with a possible flank threat from the north, could confuse the dismount movements. Therefore, here, too, the first priority was to stiffen the pressure points with all the reserves could be made available

From the conduct of the 3rd American Army toward the 7th German Army, it could be inferred that Czechoslovakia was not an American area of interest, so no life-threatening operations against Army Group Center were to be expected from the American side; this facilitated their rearward movements

What I thought least likely in southern Bavaria, the enemy had succeeded in a very short time. The strongest sections were easily overrun. Would the entrances to the Alps in the strip from Reutte to Bregenz be held? The exceptionally favorable terrain conditions made it possible to accomplish this task. Would the remnants of the 19th Army be followed by the French forces in their entirety, or only by the colonial divisions suitable and proven for mountain warfare, or would they cease movement at the northern edge of the Alps? Had the propaganda about the "Alpine fortress" had any effect? The possibility of pushing into Army Group C (Italy) from the rear might tempt them to continue the attack into the Alps

The French forces entered the Alps and made a flank thrust north of them. They were already on the northern edge of the Alps on April 27 and by April 30 had gained entry into the Alps on a broad front. After the "Zirl" and "Fern Passes" had fallen, I authorized the surrender of the 19th Army. This period saw few pleasant incidents in the Alpine region. Gauleiter Hofer was opaque; he interfered with the military leadership in a way that caused me even to issue the radio order that the orders of the Gauleiter (Innsbruck) were not to be obeyed in military matters. He did not play with open cards in other respects either. The unpleasant consequence was that half-measures were ordered and carried out with insufficient forces, that orders were not carried out or were carried out in a way that made no sense, and that bravely fighting troops suffered avoidable losses through ambiguous play or treachery. As before, the 1st Army performed its duty in an exemplary manner in the last days. Certainly - unpleasant mishaps, such as those at Dillingen and Wasserburg-Mühldorf, had occurred. But one must especially acknowledge how the 1st Army with its subordinate command posts always found temporary help, and praise the troops who again and again resisted the constant encirclements. I cite only in place of many examples General Ritter v. Hengl, who fought with a handful of men in the area of Wörgl with front to the north, then to the south, and finally to the west, thus testifying to the fact that good German disciplined troops

maintained an admirable attitude even in the most hopeless situation. Continuing eastward, the Americans reached Ischl and Hallein, where they accepted the surrender of the German troops on May 7.

More could have been achieved in the Austrian area, where forces of the 7th Army cooperated with those of Army Group South (Rendulic). However, we are still too close to these events to make historically accurate judgments. I was in Zeitweg and Graz at the beginning of May to discuss the situation and the necessary measures with the commanders in the east; General Winter, as my boss from the Commander-in-Chief South, accompanied me. He proved himself as Chief of Staff OKW South; he was an excellent help to me during the anxious days at the end of April/beginning of May. The overall impression of the situation at Army Groups Southeast (Löhr), South (Rendulic), and Center (Schörner) was satisfactory to an unexpected degree: there was no immediate danger of any of the army groups; enemy operations had generally come to a standstill in Army South; its own situation was assessed with confidence; the overall situation was understandably subdued. Large reserves were present in number, strength, and condition more than I had reason to believe. Equipment was good, the supplies in no way alarming, and they were still available in these days in an unusually large volume for conditions in the West. On the second day, I gave the orders for the now to be accelerated withdrawal into the western zone, the execution of which caused difficulties, since the staff of Army Group South had surrendered the night before. The capture of General Loehr by Tito's partisans and his subsequent death sentence weighed heavily on my mind. With him fell a splendid, knowledgeable personality of high character! The mass of Army Group South and a large part of Army Group E (Southeast) were able to come within range of the American sovereign border and in the further course to cross over into the American zone at my urgent forces of Army Group Center did not find equal concession.

In the 7th Army, independent heads had made it difficult or impossible to carry out the orders given to it by Army Group Center (Schörner). It is regrettable that this army group continued to fight beyond the allotted time. The coincidence of the Russian breakthrough with the frontal attacks of the 3rd American Army on May 6-8 necessitated the surrender of Army High Command 7 with its units.
Holder of executive power

The new activity fell to me practically with the arrival of the OKW Southern Staff on April 24, although it was not officially ordered until the beginning of May. The development of the situation urgently required such an arrangement, no matter under which personality. Therefore, in the first days of May, when despite detailed representations the draft that had already become known in mid-April was not sent to State Secretary Dr. Hayler of the Ministry of Economics since I myself was indispensable, to Grand Admiral Dönitz with the request for immediate and final regulation. It was thereupon made.

With the transfer of my headquarters to Bavaria, my hitherto purely military leadership activities were greatly expanded. State policy tasks they increased with the isolation of the southern part from the north. This is already evident from the fact that all ministries were represented by ministers or state secretaries. The southern part and, like the Reich leaders and Gauleiters, also from the Protectorate, sought connection with the supreme military leader in the southern area, who alone had something to say about the major issues.

It was essential to coordinate the Wehrmacht leadership with the Gauleiters and lay the foundations for public security. The period between surrender and peace.

Among the Gauleiters, too, there were men who wanted to end the war immediately and others who wanted to fight on to the last man. The Gauleiters of Augsburg and Salzburg are examples of the first category, the Gauleiters of Munich and Nuremberg of the second. In a discussion on May 3 at the headquarters of the OKW Southern Staff in Königsee, the Gauleiters represented there could not come to terms with the given situation, but demanded that the struggle be continued, or at least that the National Socialist leadership organization be maintained, since otherwise order could not be. If I did not order this, an emissary would immediately fly to the Grand Admiral to make this demand clear to him as indispensable. It took a lengthy speech to even awaken an understanding of the reality. You must understand, I said, that the world would not have waged war against us for more than five years with the aim of eliminating National Socialism, only to leave men of the "Party" at the helm as the victors. It became clear to me then that the party had trained its men exclusively for domestic tasks and had completely neglected foreign policy, even in its border regions.

The changeover to the post-surrender period demanded the complete cessation of all war activity, and with it the elimination of any thought of small-scale warfare.

This goal was achieved. The few men who evaded capture and imprisonment in the mountains are of no consequence nor they belong to the so-called "free fighters"

Furthermore, an administration of non-political men whom who were not suspected of National Socialism was needed as a transitional measure until the occupying powers new arrangements. This idea found general understanding, partial realization despite the shortness of time. This also included the establishment of a voluntary local militia to defend against raids during the "ownerless" period and its replacement by a local police to be approved by the occupying powers.

Third, it included securing rations for population and Wehrmacht until the occupation took over responsibility. The Wehrmacht rations only caused difficulties where, due to a sudden influx of eastern troops into economically disadvantaged or hard-to-reach areas, the necessary rations could not be supplied quickly enough.

Surplus supplies in army camps were issued to the civilian population, also to avoid looting.

State Secretary Dr. Hayler has the extraordinary merit of having ensured the continuation of the scheduled supply by the economic offices. Measures to intensify wholesale and retail trade planned; they required the approval of the occupying power, which was to be obtained through consultation with General Eisenhower. However, this which was also to cover other points, did not take place.

I made a proposal the American Army Group - General Devers - not to disband the technical troops of any kind, reinforce them with skilled craftsmen from all units, and to see to it immediately, on the basis of a planned deployment to be agreed upon and supervised with the American occupation authorities, that the bridges be repaired or rebuilt with recourse to less important bridges, that the railroads be repaired with rolling stock to the extent most necessary for the reorganization of the economy, and that the telephone installations, including the cables, be made usable again.

In addition, the plan was to make work crews and teams available on an expedited basis for distressed agriculture.

The American Army Group generally agreed to this; the Commander-in-Chief West then processed necessary organizational orders, so that the only thing missing for the realization of this most urgent work was the approval of the American headquarters. But this was - not given!

To cite just one example: At the end of May, 15,000 trained intelligence soldiers were ready to repair the public telecommunications network. I am

convinced that already at the end of 1945, traffic and the economy would have been in a condition have reconstruction possible that time have made it possible to avoid many investments that later became necessary if Morgenthau's influence had not worked down to the last American front-line soldier
Leadership difficulties at the end of the war

My thoughts about an ideal top division and the structure of a Wehrmacht leadership organization in the individual theaters of war are too extensive to be dealt with in detail. Here I would like to point out only a few points which may be of interest to the general public.

The system used by Adolf Hitler of setting up organizations working in parallel, i.e. independent of each other but active in the same field could only be understood from the point of view of a dictator filled with distrust of everyone. In terms of leadership, this organization had a disastrous effect. The main disadvantages were: Mutual distrust between the army and the SS, the administration and the party, etc., various subordination, Luftwaffe - Army - Navy, Army - SS, Wehrmacht - Labor Service, different and independent jurisdictions, etc.

In a war that demands uniform economic structure, uniform command and subordination, idiosyncrasies, e.g. of the party services, had to take revenge sometime and somehow. If one wanted to deliberately shake the firm structure of a Wehrmacht, Hitler's favorite organization, or rather disorganization, was particularly suitable for this purpose.

central control of new deployments was a self-evident necessity; only through it could the collection and training of the available people brought with the material provisions. The forward planning of the deployments was also correct. But it was wrong idea of priority (e.g., air armament before army armament) was neglected and the demands of the moment were finally taken into account alone, and if personnel and material for new deployments were held back until their use was called into question by the changed situation, whereas immediate use, to give just one example, would not have caused a front to collapse. Such redeployments, intended by Hitler, were justified only if, in terms of numbers, quality, equipment and training, formations could be brought to their feet that could decisively influence the campaign. This was no longer the case in 1945 and in any direction. I maintain that the fighting on the Rhine - viewed purely in terms

of land warfare - would have taken a different course if all the personnel and material forces available for front-line use had been brought to the front at the turn of the year or, at the latest, in January/February 1945. All forces placed at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief West at later dates could only be evaluated to a small fraction without integration into the fixed framework of war-tested formations But in this point one preached deaf ears!

Surrender

Already at the end of March 1945, my former Chief of Staff Oberbefehlshaber Süd west (General d. Pz. Tr. Röttiger) called me repeatedly and urgently requested a visit to discuss the situation I had no time to concern myself with army groups which were not under my command at that time. After their subordination, however, I went to Innsbruck on 27/28 April 1945, which saved time since it was halfway there. The meeting took place in the Gauleiter's house in presence of Generaloberst v. Vietinghoff and Ambassador Dr. Rahn Obergruppenführer Wolff, who was also to come, had been detained somewhere by partisans. The Gauleiter gave a long opening speech which he went on about the political situation, his consultation with Hitler, and the bleak military situation in the southern region. He concluded by saying that the question of a timely surrender had to be considered, but that it should be decided upon only if there was no longer any possibility of fighting. On a remark by Rahn and Vietinghoff during a break caused by the short-term absence of the Gauleiter, in which both gentlemen told me that the Gauleiter was talking quite differently today than he had a few days ago, made me sit up and take notice. Then Colonel General v. Vietinghoff reported on the military situation, which had come to an unbearable and would have to lead to disaster. He considered a whole decision and the consideration of surrender necessary. There would still be time! Ambassador Dr. Rahn remained silent. Unaware that the discussions with the Americans had already taken form of a surrender negotiation and that the negotiators were on their way, I decided according to military considerations. Then, as now, I regretted the absence of Wolff, who, for better or for worse would undoubtedly have filled me in without reserve^{†††}.) I explained that the overall situation would have to dictate

^{†††} I had not let any officer of my theater of war, not even my Chief of Staff, in on the negotiations with the Americans, because I did not want to see any of my officers endangered.

action. As soldiers we had to obey orders. These forbade a surrender that could not be justified out of necessity before the conscience of the troop leader. One must also consider the indirect consequences; the premature surrender of Army Group C (Commander-in-Chief Southwest) would bring untenable conditions for Army Groups Southeast and G north of the Alps. One must consider the psychological impact of such a step on the leadership and troops fighting around and in Berlin. One's own interests would have to take a back seat. For the rest, I assumed or hoped that the situation at the front would develop more favorably than was now feared, as it had so often in the past years. My decision to continue fighting did not meet with any opposition. I had the impression that I had strengthened Vietinghoff's back.

If I had known in detail the preparatory measures of the surrender already mentioned, I would probably have decided and acted differently. A different attitude would have been obligated by the moral demand to keep agreements that had been made and not to let the concept of fidelity to the contract fall victim again. How I would have acted, I cannot say today, in order to avoid an attackable reconstruction. Probably I would not have chosen the path that the Commander-in-Chief Southwest later considered to be the right one.

I must add here that already at my headquarters in Pullach (near Munich) two officers came to see me as emissaries of Oberbefehlshaber Südwest and Obergruppenführer Wolff, who supposed to let me in secrets, very reticent and did not provide any basis for a far-reaching decision. One of the leaders of the "Austrian Freedom Movement" did not even come as far as my door, but had very dark hints conveyed by an officer.

The entanglements resulted from the Innsbruck parley with their half-confessions in following days were anything but nice; they burdened both sides almost unbearably. When I returned from a trip to the front late at night on May 1-2, 1945, my boss reported to me that General d. Inf. Schulz, whom I had dispatched, considered any further resistance by the armies, which in his opinion were completely shattered, to be futile and asked for immediate approval of the armistice.

I gave permission, which Generaloberst v. Vietinghoff announced to his troops on the radio the next day. At the same time I reported this to the OKW in a radio message in which I made myself available for this independent and punishable act; briefly explaining the consequences associated with the surrender of the Commander-in-Chief Southwest, I simultaneously requested surrender authorization for Army Groups E (Southeast) and G, which for G was also approved.

On May 3, I appointed as negotiator for Army Group G the Commander-in-Chief the 1st Army, General d. Inf. Foertsch, who possessed the diplomatic and political qualifications for this difficult task; on the same day he was briefed by me in the details at my headquarters in Alm. On May 4, the requested negotiation took place in Salzburg, from which General Foertsch returned extraordinarily depressed. Even our hopes, which were very low in themselves, were still disappointed; one can only call this negotiation a reception of orders. Casablanca did its work! The same was true of the Commander-in-Chief Southwest, whose representatives had told me in the night talk of May 1-2, 1945, of a special concession which the Commander-in-Chief Southwest was to find! The transcript of the surrender negotiations, which I had requested, did not contain a word about this. In these days I approached General Eisenhower for the first time about the surrender of my troops facing the Americans. Eisenhower let me know by radio that a discussion could only be envisaged if I negotiated the total surrender of the German Wehrmacht. Thereupon I asked the OKW to further steps, which was done immediately.

For Army Group G, the unconditional surrender came into effect on May 6. I announced the expected surrender as early as 2 or 3 May in order to avoid further fighting and the senseless bloodshed that would result. With my thanks I appealed to the troops to maintain by their conduct the hitherto unimpeachable reputation of the German Wehrmacht. This occasion and during various troop speeches I declared that our impeccable military attitude was the only thing that could preserve for us in the long run the respect of the Allied soldiers and that it would be of greatest value for the subsequent negotiations at a higher level.

I myself had gained the impression, and this was also confirmed by the American commanders, that the men behaved impeccably after an almost six-year war and in a hopeless situation. This should be an honorable statement at the grave of the German Wehrmacht!

On May 6, my command staff was the only group in the Alpine region that had not yet surrendered. I decided to transfer a reduced combat staff to Himmler's special train, which had become ownerless and was standing on a siding near Saalfelden, and had the Americans contacted again about the surrender. In the meantime, my Chief of Staff was working out at the old headquarters the precautionary instructions I had given him concerning the details of the handover. As my special representative, I had instructed Obergruppenführer Haus- ser to see to it that the surrender of the SS troops carried out strict compliance with instructions given for this.

purpose and that - to put it briefly - no last-minute imprudence, such as evasion into the mountains, etc., was made. He, as the most popular and competent SS leader, also succeeded in this, which did not prevent that subsequently the front-experienced and well-disciplined Waffen SS troops were treated according to exceptional regulations, not always according to humane aspects.

I had quiet hours and could think about my future. Should I evade all further developments that were inevitable? I refused, because I would only have imposed my lot on a second or third person.

In no time at all an American major arrived with some soldiers, who were received by my companions; they informed me that the next day the commander of the 101st Airborne Division, General Taylor, would come to see me. The much junior but disarmingly courteous American officer - moreover, after the war, American commander of Berlin and, more recently, commander-in-chief in Korea - invited me to change quarters "Berchtesgadener Hof" in Berchtesgaden after the details of the disarmament and surrender of my staff had been arranged. I kept my weapons, medals and marshal's baton and drove to Berchtesgaden accompanied by the division commander. On the way there I was able to address various troops in the sense already mentioned. In Berchtesgaden I and my gentlemen were assigned the best rooms in the hotel; I was free to move about, being asked only to do so in the company of the congenial Lieutenant Brown, a native of Munich. The fact that I was able to visit the Eastern Army groups in Zeltweg and Graz without an American escort and provide them with my orders is also a small sign of the exemplary attitude of the American general, but also a sign of the tension between the Allies. The Commander-in-Chief of the American Army Group, General Devers, called on me during these days and maintained an emphasized distance that made me see my new situation more clearly, but also the traditional military courtesy.

Starting on the train, interviews with the Allied reporters took place continuously over the next few days without incident and almost in mutual understanding. Curt Riess, who later took special care of me, I got to know there. At Camp Mondorf near Luxembourg, I heard that a tea party scheduled for the reporters' recordings had aroused the displeasure of the American public and triggered coercive measures. General Taylor, whom I would like to thank at this point for his understanding soldierly attitude and wish soldierly luck in Korea, will be able to testify that I initially rejected this scene because it no longer fitted into my expected situation, and that I only yielded to his urgent requests.

Again and again I asked to be allowed to speak with General Eisenhower in order to suggest expedient measures for the troops and the population. However, on May 15, 1945, I took the Mondorf camp near Luxembourg via Augsburg, where my medal and marshal had to be left behind. I may insert here that neither of my two chiefs (General Winter and General Westphal) nor any of my other officers and men thought of a transport with a bad end. They all knew me intimately, were aware of almost every hour of my wartime life, and were far from thinking of a court-martial or death sentence. Nor did they think that I would be taken not to General Eisenhower but to a special camp. Why did they think it right not to play with open cards?

The question of surrender has probably occupied every German troop leader at different times and in different directions. It was primarily a matter for the leadership of the state. I considered it incompatible with my conscience to enter into discussions with American negotiators in Switzerland through Obergruppenführer Wolff in the fall of 1944 without the knowledge of the OKW, but with later notification to Hitler, since I was of the opinion that the war had to be ended by diplomatic-political means. This step was not intended by me as an initiation of the surrender of my theater of war but rather as an aid to the state leadership in order to come to negotiations at all.

In the second place, the question of surrender is a military matter consisting in execution of a stretching of arms approved or ordered by the state leadership. For the first-mentioned case, the surrender of Army Group G, for the second-mentioned case, the total capitulation of the German Wehrmacht can be cited as a prime example.

In addition, surrender may become necessary when the troops have been crushed, resistance has become futile and pointless, and no immediate military or state interests will be harmed by leaving the fight. However, one must also be aware that playing with the idea of surrender wears down the mental forces and the will to fight. This type of surrender occurred in several variations. Examples of surrenders caused by the development of the events of the war, which, despite the disadvantages for the overall situation, were the last solution to end the struggle, are the surrender of the Tunisian armies and of Army Group B in the Ruhr, although this is an obvious difference between the two.

Finally, there are capitulations for which the military leaders can be held responsible if the continuation of the fight either does not bind any enemy forces, the fight has become hopeless due to its own internal weakness, or if the outcome of the war can no longer be influenced in any way. In each of

these cases, the effect on the neighbors or on the whole must be examined in detail beforehand.

Capitulations that are planned in advance and carried out suddenly without even considering neighborly obligations, betray a great degree of irresponsibility; they are usually politically justified without the responsible leaders having more than a very limited insight into the overall situation. World War II offers examples of this as well. In the age of technology, such far-reaching decisions as the suggestion and execution of surrenders without the involvement of superior authorities should become more and more exceptional.

The whole complex of questions leads us once again to the old problem of the "political soldier".

German Wehrmacht did not know a "political" soldier; the educational product of Colonel General v. Seeckt was the "constitutionally loyal" soldier far away from the party-political gears.

The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg broke the baton on this soldier and demanded instead an attitude that knew how to decide influence on major foreign policy and eliminate criminal political elements in crisis domestic situations or to overthrow governments were moving in a criminal direction.

Between these two forms of soldiering there is a contrast that can hardly be bridged.

In mid-1947, without dealing with the "Nuremberg" special case of the Third Reich, I fundamentally dealt with the "political soldier" in a study:

"I require of every senior officer in high command positions a high level of political insight, which gives him an accurate, deep insight into all events of political life inside and outside his country. Insight should enable the soldierly high leaders to play the responsible and accountable advisory role to the leader of the state, to think ahead and at the same time to coordinate the military necessities with the political realities. This delicate cooperation is essential and can lead to serious conflicts of conscience and external conflicts. The military leader must take into account the impact of such an attitude on foreign policy.

However, I do not at all recognize a 'political soldier' who, according to his respective conception of politics, pursues his own politics and thus fails to soldiering its innermost essence. Such soldiers arrogate to themselves powers under constitutional law which cannot be tolerated by any leader or government; they do not want to give themselves up. Already today, in 1947, evidential examples of this view are multiplying in all countries."

With these sentences I wanted to emphasize the non-partisan position of the officer, especially the senior officer, but also the binding of every soldier to the lawful government and to the lawful form of government. Binding force must be the soldier's oath, which emphasizes obedience as a categorical imperative which says no more and no less than that the soldier must obey his superiors and the lawful government. If one loosens these ties, one abets the "coup d'étatists" who very rarely have the best interests of the state or the people in mind. Thus the armed forces, which are supposed to preserve and protect the state, can become the destroyer of the state. The countless historical examples in which "subversives" did not build up but tore down, or at least smothered the freedom of the citizen in blood, are warning enough. A positive example is not a sufficient compensation, but it can serve as a proof that in very rare exceptional cases a detachment from the oath can become a moral obligation for the most responsible soldier. This man must know that he is walking the fine line between "Hosanna" and "Crucify him."

One more thing: politics and soldiering contradict each other internally. Only exceptional personalities can unite both areas. There is some truth in the statement of an officer after the First World War. World War I that a soldier who devotes himself to politics ceases to be a good soldier. I know from my own wartime experience that political talk in crisis military situations affects military performance. Here, the separation of powers: "here soldier - here politician" seems to me to be the healthy solution. On the other hand, certain that the troops are as good or as bad as their leaders. Today's enlightened times demand an officer who can think in the big politics and teach his soldiers about it. Only then will the "citizen in uniform" be transformed from a "party-political citizen" into a "soldier who thinks in terms of state policy." One cannot imagine this task hard enough, since we Germans neglected political training during one to two centuries entangled in mutual wars, and have more or less fanatical negators of the present state in the extreme left- and right-wing parties and politicians.

Therefore, the supreme law remains the unbreakable bond of the soldier to the state and the constitutional form of government through the oath ^{****}) and the education of the "citizen in uniform" to the "patriotically thinking, sworn soldier".

The surrender of the German Wehrmacht on May 9, 1945, marked the end of a war that had captivated the population, economy and science of the entire

**** As long as the oath still has its binding significance, state, civic and church life should not be parted with, even in the Wehrmacht

world for five and a half years

From this unique use of forces, knowledge has been gained in all areas of human experience, the compilation and meaningful processing of which require decades of peaceful activity. Interventions in national substance and in the civilization and culture of the nations involved in the war have taken place, the elimination of which requires an equally long period of the most strenuous work of the peoples. However, these findings, which are not pleasant in themselves, seem to allow the conclusion could be spared to the next generations. Whether this ideal goal will be striven for and achieved by people who are not exactly always ideal must unfortunately be doubted on a cursory glance at post-war events.

Despite the obvious and self-evident primacy of the military leadership in the theaters of war, political leadership remains the invisible leadership that observes, tries to balance the picture of the world situation and then intervenes when a narrowing of the war is indicated, an expansion can no longer be avoided or peace is to be achieved or has become an absolute necessity.

To let the political and diplomatic strings completely fall away and to rely solely on military warfare is demonstrably wrong in the highest degree. It is equally wrong, however, to leave the enemy no chance at all for an amicable peace. Imperialism, hatred and revenge then become the cause of the war of annihilation, the consequences of which may even affect the victor. In the greatest states of agitation, reason must not be switched off; on the contrary, the view into the future demands it to a particularly high degree.

The space expansion of the war is the natural consequence of the ever closer and shorter connections between the individual peoples and the technology overcoming space. After that, only the scales have changed, but not the values.

MY POSTWAR EXPERIENCE

First years of captivity

The handover negotiations took place under the sign of "unconditional surrender". Far be it from me to resurrect the time after the stretching out of arms with all its embarrassing and tormenting incidents, but I am of the opinion that we have to put aside what separates us in order to come closer to each other in our old Europe, which has become fragile, in order to learn to understand each other, in order to find way to a united Europe beyond the small states, which finally belong to history. Always a supporter of Briand's idea, my last doubts about the urgent reorganization of Europe were removed. When in Berlin, taking off in a slow plane of the year 1934, one had to consult the map after only one hour of flight in order not to cross the Czechoslovakian border, then this expresses a change in the history of the world. I clearly explained my attitude to an officer of the American "Historical Division" at the beginning of 1948 with the words: "If I have decided in favor of the West and am working in my small circle of life for the realization of a European state structure, and therefore also work for the American 'Historical Division', this means a lot to a person who feels unjustly condemned to death by a British court."

The ability to forget that lies in these words must be acquired - however hard it may be for the individual. However, some events or disputes must be discussed, not to accuse, but to learn from the mistakes for the future.

My path of suffering led me to various Allied camps and prisons:

In the "Ash-Cage" - what a meaningful expression! Mondorf near Luxembourg, I met in 1945 the former German prominence of state, Wehrmacht and party Count Schwerin-Krosigk, the Reich Minister of Finance, and I can claim the right to have calmed the restless spirits and brought them closer together. Magnificent American officers and non-

commissioned officers looked after us, to whom the camp leader, Colonel Andrus stood in remarkable contrast. Perhaps it was for this reason that he became commandant of I.M.T. Nuremberg Prison. All of us without any exception felt this American officer was detrimental to the idea of uniting nations. The younger American officers felt that I would be out of place in the camp and made more than commendable efforts to get me transferred to another camp that was not so cadaverous. The fact that the efforts were in vain not judgment about these officers above the hate psychosis.

I had a good time in Oberursel, I only spent a few days in the mischief-bringing place of the barracks examination camp. But what I got to see there was not nice. I came to the conclusion, and later found it confirmed elsewhere that the CIC service - one may call it something else in other states - transforms the person in such a way that in intercourse with it one unable to suppress an uneasiness can mature into anxiety and fear. This profession also stamps the bearer! Many things would have been avoided if so many emigrated Germans had not been involved. It is too much to expect objectivity and humanity from emigrants, from people with difficult past experiences.

Nuremberg - anyone who experienced it in the remand prison will never forget it. Five months solitary confinement, without any justification - from December 23, 1945! One felt like a "leper" during the "exercise" or in the church. In between, long hours as a witness for Göring - as I was told from lawyer circles: "Finally, a classic witness!" Two incidents from this testimony activity stuck. In longer explanations I justified the legality of the air raids in the first days of the Polish campaign. The Reich Air Ministry had drafted rules for air warfare that were analogous to Hague Land Warfare Regulations. When the Prosecutor General Maxwell Fife concluded this item of the program with the remark: "So you had so and so many Polish cities illegally attacked!" I replied in a raised voice with dead silence in the hall: "Mr. Prosecutor General, I made my remarks as a German officer with over 40 years of service, as a German Field Marshal and under oath! If my remarks are so little heeded, I will make no further statements for the consequence." The embarrassed silence in the hall was interrupted after some time by the words of the Prosecutor General: "I did not mean to offend." What?! -

Later, the lawyer Dr. Latenser wanted to know something about the

partisans in Italy, which made the Russian Prosecutor General Rudenko immediately jump up and declare: "The witness seems to me to be the least suitable to talk about it. (I could have said so much about it after all!) And this from a Rudenko whose life story was somewhat familiar to me! I regretted that the Court did not have the same knowledge of personnel; nevertheless, after a long deliberation outside the hall, the subject was dismissed.

Nuremberg was followed by Dachau. My comrades traveling with me were warned not to talk to me; I was also warned to talk to them in the opposite sense, which meant that after arriving in the Dachau "bunker" I had to talk to all the cell inmates, crammed into a small cell with Field Marshals v. Brauchitsch and Milch, State Secretary Bohle, Envoy v. Bargen and a Unterscharführer. Our guardian was a gypsy who was particularly interested in my watch. In the bunker, I learned to stand still again, while my thoughts circled all the more vividly.

Refreshing was the sympathy of the SS prisoners of war in the campour fate and our person, after we, exhausted and housed in a barrack, were given free run in the camp area

Nuremberg again and then Langwasser, where, after a brief welcome by the many comrades, I was chosen totakenwith Skorzeny to the heavily barred barracks prisonThis stay had the undeniableadvantage of good accommodations, the best American rations, and comforting care Soon I was taken to another barrack, where I was supervised in the most intimate pursuits during the night by three people (two with submachine guns, one with a candlestick). Life was pleasing in extremes:

Two days later we left in a beautiful motor car with Field Marshals List, v. Weichs and some junior officers for the camp of the American "Historical Division" in Allendorf The accompanying officer was a gentleman and had heart; we felt among our own kind. At Allendorf the officers of the "Historical Division" under the excellent Colonel Potter took the greatest pains to alleviate the usual hardships of camp life. There I also began toinfluencea larger circle of generals and general staff officersparticipate in writing the history of the war.The main reason I gave was that this was the only way to create a memorial to our Wehrmacht and thusinfluence Allied historiography in the interest of historical truth The secondary purpose was to put down the experiences. The difficulties were

mainly due to the lack of documentary material. However, in my opinion, the works were and are quite useful documents for the final historiography. Names of the officers of the American "Historical Division" would be too many, to whom I must give credit for extensive understanding and sympathy for our and our families' situation: they were and are to this day, almost without exception, ambassadors of "good will" and "fraternization"

In the fall of 1946 I spent a month at the famous "Kensington Cage" in London. Colonel Scotland ran the scepter there; this Cage is controversial; I found a remarkably good reception and consideration. Almost daily I conversed with Colonel Scotland. These debates brought us closer together; I learned at the time and later about his legal thinking; he dared, after all, request my release in 1950 in a persuasive petition and in unmistakable language. When a subordinate showed me one evening the KZ. airs of a Kapo, I informed Scotland with the words that we superiors unfortunately do not learn all wrong actions of our subordinates and that I therefore considered it my duty to enlighten him about the process. The consequence was that this sergeant also complied with the rules of the standard. Another brief account of a conversation with a Jewish interrogator of German origin: The occasion for the conversation was the growing opposition to Jews in the world had been brought up and criticized by numerous Allies. I said to my interrogator: "You have not understood the signs of the times; it is not impossible that you have missed the unique opportunity to provide the Jewish people with a foundation that would have given them an unassailable position in the world. Punishment of criminals against the Jewish people, reparation they had to demand with full right; for this all Germans and the whole world would have full understanding; worldwide help would have flowed to you. But to indulge in revenge as a guiding thought is pernicious, because from this state of mind only new injustice arises." He - visibly impressed: "Yes, you are asking a lot from us Jews!" My reply: "Yes, fully admitted; but is not the aim of a final pacification of the world worth this certainly high effort?"

Allendorf's advantage was that we were allowed to receive visits in a generous manner; thus we were also able to spend Christmas 1946 and New Year 1946/47 with our families. This spiritual strengthening meant a lot to our women; the fact that they held out through the coming years is certainly

partly due to these visits. On January 17, 1947, I was transported to Rimini via Salzburg the start of my trial. Colonel Potter, accompanied by another colonel, took me to Frankfurt to hand me over to two very nice English officers. A sign of the confusion of the times: with the English officers I was in Salzburg in an American house during the day as the guest of the owner of the apartment, only to be accommodated at night in a bunk of a former horse stable and then to be greeted again in Rimini by a larger delegation of officers. Good to see such short moments that comradeship does not stop at borders or before the defeated.

I am always pleased to note that soldiers are often better, more empathetic politicians than the personalities who feel called to do so. It seems like satire when it has to be stated that the soldiers so often rejected, ridiculed and defamed by the whole world are appointed to leading positions and showered with honors by the same world in real times of need. One need only look to America convinced of this (Marshall, Eisenhower, MacArthur). America is only one example here. Shouldn't this fact give reason to judge soldiers in a less adversarial and libidinous way?

My process^{§§§§})

My departure at 6 a.m. for Venice-Mestre turned into a small, moving ovation by camp inmates, all of whom had been under my command; I promised to stand up for their honor, for that of Germany. Due to certain events for which Germany was not responsible, the arrival of my lawyers delayed that the Prosecutor wanted to start the trial without a lawyer or with the assignment of a judge requested by the Prosecutor as a prosecution witness. Again it was an English officer who stepped in here and said to the Prosecutor, "Surely you are not to make a farce of the trial from the beginning." My trial was preceded in November 1946 by the proceedings against Generaloberst v. Mackensen and Generalleutnant Mälzer in Rome. Both had been accused like me for the shooting of 335 Italians in the Ardeatine caves near Rome on March 24, 1944. Both were sentenced to death by the verdict of November 30, 1946. I spoke as a witness for my subordinates - but without any success! The chairman of the court in Rome was called Fairplay!

My trial in Venice-Mestre lasted over three months, from February to May 1947; it was exhausting. Less so were the six days during which I sat in the witness chair and testified under oath. When an English officer said to me after the trial, on the day of the pronouncement of the death sentence, after a long conversation, "Field Marshal, you have no idea what respect you have earned all the English officers during the trial, especially today!", this remark indicates that I stood my ground. To the English officer I replied: "Herr Major, and if I had behaved one iota differently, I would have been unjustly made a German field marshal."

With the exception of the Judge Advocate, the composition of the court-martial was different from that in Rome. The Judge, i.e. the only judicial person who was supposed to advise the non-legally trained judges, also did so in all other major trials; they ended almost without exception with death sentences. When the Judge concluded his "Final Speech" with the words that I was in the twilight, I may state unequivocally that he was by no means in the twilight of bias and living objectivity. A Swiss newspaper wrote at the time that he was the second, and indeed the better, prosecutor.

The court was not composed as is customary under international

§§§§ My lawyer, Dr. Latenser, reports on this in detail in his book, "Defense of German Soldiers."

regulations. In addition to a general (Hackwell-Smith), it was staffed by four British lieutenant colonels. The President was not able to express his exemplary objectivity so convincingly in the second half of the trial, and I emphasize the word "able." During this period of the trial he pleased himself in the role of a very temperamental inquisitor, without this in any way calling into question the considerate treatment of my person. Lieutenant-Colonel Scotland, who dealt with the "Kesselring case" in a pamphlet in 1952, expressed the following opinion about the court: "Let all right-thinking people in England and in Germany make up their own minds about the sacrifices of these two tribunals, which may well be described as the most ill-informed ever convened by order of His Majesty ..."

Now to the case itself. The indictment handed to me comprised two counts: Point 1 charged me with participating in the killing of the aforementioned 335 Italians, and Point 2 charged me with inciting the troops under my command, through two orders, to kill Italian civilians by way of reprisal and in violation of the laws and customs of land warfare, which would have resulted in the killing of a total of 1087 Italians.

The indictment, which was as short as it was momentous, had witness statements - so-called sergeant affidavits - attached as exhibits, nothing else.

The Judge Advocate in his "Summing up" advised the judges that they would have to acquit me if they assumed that responsibility for the reprisal had passed from the Wehrmacht to the SD. This seems to me to be the key point to count 1 of the indictment. From the verdict "Guilty - death by shooting" I must conclude that the court did not consider this to be proven. In this connection it must be said that my Chief of the General Staff, my Ia and Ic, who were later joined by the then War Diary Leader, testified under oath that Hitler in his final order transferred the execution of the reprisal to the SD; the SD leader also admitted this in the course of the trial. Why then nevertheless the "guilty"? One can only assume that the sworn statements of my officers were considered "untrustworthy." This was inconceivable to all of us. Finally, I told myself that this could only be attributed to a different understanding of the oath. During the two trials I became more and more convinced that in the Allied post-war proceedings the oath was not seen as a means of promoting truth, but only as a means of exerting pressure to get the last, even more than could be testified at all, out of the unfortunate victims.

Since I was allowed to assume that the court would at least have to regard the trial situation as doubtful - there could be no question of proof - I

could not expect a "guilty" verdict according to the international legal principle "in dubio pro reo" also recognized by the British

From the course of the trial - a statement of reasons for the verdict was not given and is still missing today - one could further assume, on the basis of the Judge's instruction to the officer-judges, that the applied reprisal was in itself considered permissible under international law. I will come to the commanded ratio 1:10. If I could not expect a guilty verdict because of the reprisal - even if I had still been responsible for its execution - the court had to consider it proven that Mackensen and I, under our responsibility, which was only cancelled by the final Hitler order, let it come to any reprisal at all, but rather wanted to try to achieve the desired deterrent effect by executing death candidates, i.e. people who had forfeited their lives on the basis of international law. Under Wehrmacht responsibility, the number of victims was to be adjusted to the existing number of death candidates in the prisons incidentally in full agreement with the fact that the Commander-in-Chief Southwest and the SD thus wanted to put themselves in deliberate contradiction to Hitler's order, which was to be expected with certainty and which said otherwise at least have been a decent attempt to act humanely. I go further and claim that no court in the world could have proven the "dolus" of a crime against the German commanders-in-chief after this uncontradicted factual situation - even if they had still been responsible.

Hitler's final order determined the ratio of reprisal as 1:10 and the SD to carry out the reprisal, thus eliminating the Wehrmacht and depriving it of any influence. The court seems not to have agreed with this ratio of 1:10, even taking into account restriction we are seeking, but rather to have regarded it as going beyond what is permissible under international law. If this is true, it is all the more surprising since it is proven and known that Allied commanders have ordered equal or higher rates of reprisals without there having been in their cases a crisis situation in the war and the conditions for "self-defense" as they existed in the Rome case. I refrain from any judgment justification quotas determined by the Allied commanders, since it is recognized that reprisal is a matter of discretion, as I explained in more detail in Section 21. Therefore, it is difficult to pass judgment on "right" or "wrong" in such a case years later without knowledge of the atmosphere at the time. It would have been beneficial if the judges, precisely because they were sitting in judgment as *Siegers*, had included this point in their deliberations. The fact that an Italian court, i.e. a court of the nation affected by the shooting, came to an acquittal on

the same point in the Kappler (SD) trial may have put British judges in a strong subsequent conflict of conscience, which today seems to me almost like a fateful balance

In the overall view, one should not forget that the cause of the reprisal was the destruction of a police company of old Tyroleans with many children, which had been deployed only for police duty, i.e. for the protection of the Italian population and the killing of various Italian street passers-by by ideologically incited Italian communists, who pursued their treasonous goals under the guise of "Everything for the Fatherland" This should be all the more serious because, due to previous assassinations, the population of Rome had been warned by public warnings and by the church of the expected consequences of further assassinations.

I have heard from friendly British sources that I also assumed responsibilities which exceeded my authority. This can certainly not be true for the shooting of the Italians in the Ardeatine caves since I have made clear in court the independence of the SD from the Wehrmacht; moreover, it is hardly a point of contention any more.

As I have already mentioned, I tried with Mackensen to circumvent the reprisal; this was not appreciated at all by the British courts. The American Military Tribunal No. V in Nuremberg, on the other hand, clearly states its more understandable position in the following words:

"To escape legal and moral branding, it would be enough to prove that the criminal order was evaded every time the opportunity presented itself."

My two generals (v. Mackensen and Mälzer) and I were sentenced to death because our attempt to circumvent one of Hitler's orders failed, without us - being eliminated - somehow being to blame for the failure

Under the circumstances I have described, the lack of legal reasoning in the judgment, which is objected to on all sides, takes on a special, unmistakable note

Regarding charge 2: I have described the emergence, fighting methods, etc. of the Italian gang groups and the nature of the German countermeasures in section 21 as objectively as possible; they reveal my basic attitude to all questions concerning the gang system I supplement these remarks by taking over a sentence from a letter written at the end of 1952 to the Italian Prime Minister de Gasperi, in which I asked him, because of the newly arisen, fundamentally unjustified agitation against me help from his high position in the dissemination of historical truth

« . . . I understand the pain of the Italian mothers and fathers at the death

of their sons, I bow in silence to this genuine sorrow, since these dead, in so far as they had not fallen to a foreign communism, also died for their fatherland. But do not these same men and women also believe that the German mothers and fathers cried out in genuine grief when they received the news of the death of their loved ones who had been shot down from ambush or to go to their death through a terrible imprisonment? Do these men and women not understand it was my duty to save the German soldiers from this fate? ...»

This charge was based on the reference to my orders of 17 June 1944, 1 July 1944, 15 August 1944 and 24 September 1944.

I will limit myself to mentioning the points that were considered incriminating after the "Final Speech" of the prosecutor:

1st order of June 17, 1944:

"The fight against the gangs must therefore be carried out all available means and with the greatest severity I will cover any leader who, in the choice and sharpness of the means, goes beyond the restrained measure usual in our country."

In the first English translation, the word "means" was rendered by the word "methods"; if one reads the sentence in this way, one can see in it some support for the charge. I noticed that in the later trial of Obergruppenführer Simon (Padua), the prosecutor who also acted as second prosecutor in my trial again spoke of "methods". Should they have stuck to the erroneous translation also in my trial?

"Again, the old principle applies that a lapse in the choice of means to prevail is still better than omission and negligence. The gangs are to be attacked and destroyed." This excerpt already reveals its character as a tactical directive; it was addressed as a 'secret command matter' to the leaders down to the division commanders, who had to give the necessary orders for the individual case within the framework of the directive purpose of this directive, and also of the following ones, was to prevent the fight on both sides from sliding into the expected chaos, to oblige the commanders to devote the greatest personal attention to the neglected gang in other words place gang fight on the same level as the fight at the front and to release the use of all available combat resources for this type of fight

One believed out of the socket: "... I will cover every leader etc. ..." that I intended to cover every reprisal. That this view is not tenable is evident from the fact that this order does not mention reprisal at all

1. order of July 1, 1944, which, unlike the order of June 17, is not a pure combat order; rather, under b) and c) it also contains principles for reprisals

that could be applied

a) "In my appeal to the Italians, I announced the gang fight with the sharpest means. This announcement must not be an empty threat I make it the duty of all soldiers and police-soldiers to bring the sharpest means to bear in the event of a crime. Any act of violence by the gangs must be punished immediately."

b) "Where gangs occur in large numbers, the percentage of the male population residing in such district be determined from time to time, shall be arrested and shot if violence occurs."

c) "If soldiers, etc., are fired upon from localities, the locality shall be

burn down. Perpetrators and ringleaders are to be publicly hanged."

This order, addressed to the same high command authorities, was in response to a telling call by Marshals Badoglio and Alexander for the assassination of the Germans and to the further intensification of the gang warfare it caused. I do not believe that the charge under 2b would have been brought at all if the British prosecuting authority had been aware of Article 358d of the American Rules of Land Warfare, which states:

"Hostages arrested and held for the declared purpose of serving as security against unlawful acts on the part of the enemy forces or population may be punished or killed if the unlawful acts are nevertheless committed"

Furthermore, the American interpretation of the law is that partisans and guerrillas may be killed summarily, i.e., without prior trial. However, I did not have to make use of this right since in no demonstrable case were gang members killed after the fighting without a prior court-martial verdict. If the court can deduce from the sentence of my order of September 24:

"I further order that, for the consequence, courts of demurrer shall immediately convene on the spot ..."

tried to read out the opposite, this is not understandable; after all, it was pointed out conclusively in court that the decisive feature of this paragraph are the words "immediately on the spot". These words did not say that the courts-martial were to be introduced for the first time, they were there; the words were intended to impress upon the soldiers that there were effective legal means of punishing adversities under international law, if only they were properly applied. If the court should have been of the opinion that my instructions had incited to "terror against the civilian population", it must be countered that "civilian population", "women and children" are nowhere mentioned. It could not have been meant. All German commanders-in-chief, commanders and division commanders known at the time of the trial with their

whereabouts orally in court or in writing under oath that they had never understood the instruction in sense of the indictment. Only one commander-in-chief, in London's "Kensington Cage," under the pressure of an understandable Cage psychosis, unsworn critical remarks about my orders which he retracted under oath as a voluntary witness in court. Since the court apparently did not allow this correction to stand, the facts of the case are briefly described.

My order said: "I will cover any leader who goes beyond the usual restraining measure in the choice and sharpness of the means"

The witness had in mind, "I will cover for any leader who goes far beyond the call of duty in the choice and sharpness of the remedy."

Rightly the second version could be objected, but - it was wrong. Even if one wanted to attach importance to further written and unsworn statements of the witness, one could not read out incitement to terrorism against the civilian population words of the witness: "this order contains a great danger for the troops" and "orders of the field marshal give the troops too much freedom." Moreover, the court must have known from the testimony of the chief of staff of the relevant army high command that there was no threat to troop morale.

One cannot imagine that the court could have stuck to the written London witness statement after clarification of the real facts. And yet ...?!

Final words of the order of July 1, 1944 were: "Any kind of looting is forbidden and will be severely punished. Every measure shall be severe but just. The reputation of the German soldier demands this."

They alone speak against the interpretation of the court. They put the meaning of my orders in perspective.

The orders of August 21 and September 24, 1944, could have convinced even biased judges that my orders did not intend terror.

An excerpt from the order of August 21, 1944:

"In the course of the gang warfare and large-scale action against the bandits, incidents have occurred in the last few weeks which are damaging the reputation and discipline of the German Wehrmacht in the most serious way and have nothing to do with retaliatory measures.

Since the fight against gangs is to be carried out with the sharpest means, innocent elements will occasionally be affected in the process.

If, however, instead of pacifying an area, a large-scale action only brings greater unrest among the population as well as the most serious food worries, and are again to the detriment of the German Wehrmacht, then this is a sign that this action was carried out wrongly and is seen only as a 'raid'.

Duce, too, in a letter to the Plenipotentiary Minister of the Greater German Reich to the Italian Government, Ambassador Dr. Rahn, bitterly complained about the way invarious bandit actions were carried out, as well as retaliatory measures, which in the end were directed only against the population and not against the bandits

The consequences of all these undertakings have largely undermined confidence in the German Wehrmacht, creating further enemies for us and encouraging enemy propaganda." Excerpt from the directive of September 24, 1944:

"The Duce is once again sending me documents concerning conduct by members of the units in Italy against the population which is contrary to my order of August 21, 1944, which is outrageous in the way it is being carried out, and which is driving even the decent elements of the population who are willing to fight into the enemy camp or to the partisans I am no longer willing to go along with this, even if I do not close my mind to the fact that such deceitful cowardly raids cause hardships even against innocent people.

The Duce's compilation is sent to the high command authorities; the Plenipotentiary General is asked to have most blatant cases investigated, result of the investigation to me, and hand matter over to the responsible command authorities for final judgment These authorities will also report the result to me."

principle, it must be said with regard to these orders that the official inspections at the time did not reveal any culpable failure or conduct on the part of the German soldiers Incidentally, I have stated conclusively in court that I investigated every report of an offense committed by my troops and, if applicable, took legal action against the perpetrators If one has taken from the order of August 21, 1944, the admission of incitement to terror by the orders of June 17 and July 1, 1944, this would mean, in other words, that I ordered criminal acts in order to hold my subordinates responsible in an order given shortly thereafter crimes that had occurred in the meantime and had been carried out in accordance with the order This does not fit in very well with the over-responsibility that has been attributed to me; I would certainly not have remained for a minute longer the "popular" commander-in-chief that my former soldiers still consider me to be today. It should be noted that the evidence for the charge has not been produced in a single case. Even where I assumed that troops might have a violation of international law, an Italian court-martial found

A few words about the sergeant affidavits. The affidavits were drawn up years after the event by non-judicial persons on the basis of testimonies,

over a hundred persons, many of whom were still under pressure from the gangs and communists. Most of the Italian trials conducted the meantime revealed that the testimonies were untrue or richly fanciful, that is, that they had no probative value. In some cases it turned out that the atrocities had to be put on the account of neo-fascist associations (e.g. Brigata Nera) or criminal Italian elements in German uniform. The English examining magistrate corroborated this in a petition filed on my behalf: "Coupled with my special knowledge of the methods used by the Germans in Italy during the war my petition is well founded that these three men - Kesselring, v. Mackensen, Mälzer - should not only be released from prison, but pardoned."

Here, too, it must be said in conclusion that all the German and Italian witnesses appeared for me must have been regarded "untrustworthy", whereas Italian witnesses who spoke as "storytellers" and the British sergeant-affidavits must have been regarded as "credible". For us, who were brought up in the German conception of law, it was again incomprehensible that also in these cases the legal principle "in dubio pro reo" was not observed and the "death penalty by shooting" was imposed.

My four attorneys - highly qualified lawyers: Dr. Laternser, Dr. Frohwein, Dr. Schütze, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Schwinge - did not want to believe in any "guilty". When the Judge Advocate then pronounced two "guilty" verdicts, they believed they had to tell me that only a very light sentence could be considered. They insisted on this view despite my clear contrary opinion.

Thus it came about that I had to comfort my lawyers, twice condemned to death. I give this true sober account because it seems to me suitable to illuminate the trial life to its depths. It is not worth saying a word about the shortcomings of the I.M.T. procedure, which was adopted by the victorious powers for all war crimes trials. They are known all over the world. The "ex post facto" law is rejected by all upright jurists of the world. Vestigia terrent!

On the evening of the day of judgment, I put down the thoughts that moved me in the following letter:

"May 6, 1947. My fateful day has passed. I foresaw this outcome, not because I did not believe in my lawful actions, but because I despaired of the world's sense of justice. My lawyers and many others thought the verdict impossible. In this alone lies a justification for me, if my conscience had not already given it to me. The verdict had to be against me because

1. the Rome process had preceded, for whose recognition the

Judge Advocate desperately struggled,

2. the gang activity glorified to this day was not allowed to go down in history as a criminal act, and

3. the German officer and with him the soldiering in his marrow should be hit. -

That the Western powers themselves raped their future with it, they overlook today in their deluded delusion. I have to think of a conversation in Nuremberg when a well-informed man told me: They will be eliminated this way or that. You are too big, too popular. You are a danger! 'I have seen my task in testifying for our decent attitude; my personal attitude was prescribed by my name, my rank and the consideration for the German people. I have tried to live up to these demands and, God willing, I will come through even the most difficult with dignity. I can say of myself that I have wanted the best in my life; if I have not always achieved it, let those judges who have never failed. Condemned by Pharisees cannot touch a man who thinks something of himself or has thought something of himself. My life has been rich because it was filled with work, worries and responsibility. The fact that this life had to end in a passion course is beyond our influence. But if even in this situation I can and may still be something to my comrades, if men of rank and standing regard a conversation with me as a consecration hour, then it is an unheard-of grace that has been granted to me! When I am recognized even by my former opponents and all shake their heads in dismay at the verdict, it says a lot. When Italians declare that instead of a trial I should have received four gold medals, one sees in it an attempt to disregard the present atmosphere. My life, whose content was this trial for long weeks, still had a meaning after two directions! By an acquittal, because with it it would have been shown to the world public millions of Germans were and are decent; with it a remarkable break into the world opinion could have let arise a dawn for us Germans. Then by the execution, because thereby a martyr would be created for the German people, whose memory and survival could give a boost to the youth. Since case 1 is out of the question, I must actually strive dutifully for case 2. And this leaving the world is not too difficult in itself - something makes it difficult: the care for the loved ones and the people to whom one could have perhaps still been something. Nevertheless, I will still fight for my right and thus for the right of my soldiers until the end. That is why I will file a well-founded legal appeal in order to subject this impossible verdict to another revision. For my own part, I reject requests for clemency; whether others do so, I must leave to them."

In 1950 and 1951, the Bavarian Spruchgericht found "not affected" the denazification proceedings which dealt with the same points as the trial in Venice. Although I - incidentally also the English - saw in these proceedings a violation of the principle "ne bis in idem", I was grateful for the judgment because of the criticism expressed in it.

In the previous section on my trial, I said that the court should have regarded the legal situation as at least doubtful. According to international legal custom, they would then have to deal with my person as a whole; in the opinion of my lawyers, the court could have come to an acquittal from this consideration alone. I must clearly state here that the Judge Advocate, who otherwise made a point of writing down almost every word in his notebook, was bored and put down his pen during the questioning of witnesses, as was the case, for example, on the following points. His behavior showed an open lack of interest!

As embarrassing as it is for me to push myself and my merits into the foreground, I feel compelled in the interest of objective examination to mention some things that have already become historical. How many prominent persons may argue about the paternity of the measures to be discussed is certain that I alone had to bear the not everyday responsibility for the decisions and orders. I consider it right to make more detailed remarks here, because I believe that the German people and the other peoples of the Western world should learn that the German soldiers, despite the bloody craft of war, were guided by humane, cultural and economic considerations to an extent that wars of this magnitude should very rarely show

Measures to protect the Italian population and culture

Commander-in-Chief South prevented the planned evacuation of Rome, a city of millions. In contrast to the 1914/18 war, in which cities near the front generally depopulated themselves or were forcibly depopulated, Rome, 20 km from the front, increased in population by almost half. Evacuation of the city of millions, even if it had been confined to a specific circle, certainly have resulted in losses running into the hundreds of thousands given the Allied aviation principles, lack of transport space, and the rationing difficulties.

Israelite community in Rome was to be deported to unknown destination on Himmler's orders. I made the execution impossible, fact that I am still being

portrayed today, by the Jewish community in Rome of all places, as a common murderer and criminal, shows little insight

Oberbefehlshaber Südwest succeeded in preventing further evacuations of overcrowded cities and towns by the measures explained below (hospital towns, etc.)

Italian administration was unable to provide the necessary rations to the population of central Italy due to lack of transport space, etc. The assistance of the German administrative agencies was also insufficient. Commander-in-Chief Southwest has the merit of putting measures on right organizational track, of having helped out with rations from German stocks, and of having provided military transport space (railroad and motor vehicles), which still secured subsistence level of the population, but which already seriously endangered the military supply of the front. Commander-in-Chief Southwest also agreed to neutralize the port of Civitavecchia and make it available exclusively for Red Cross supplies. It should not go unmentioned that the Vatican came not only with requests and suggestions, but also helped with its own, albeit limited, resources. All these measures were very difficult and costly by the Allied air raids, in spite of the clearly visible designation of the vehicles on great route between upper Italy and Rome.

Anyone who was in Rome during the war knows how often Commander-in-Chief Southwest had to repair bombed water pipes with his technical troops, and every Italian should know that by not blowing up bridges and other installations, at the cost of considerable military disadvantages, the water supply and other things remained intact even after the German troops withdrew.

Finally, it should be noted that German initiative and the supply of men, weapons, and material kept the losses from Allied bombing raids in the almost universally overcrowded localities tolerable.

Measures for the protection of church and culture were carried out almost solely by the Germans from September 1943 on, partly at the instigation of various Italian church leaders and the Italian Ministry of Education. This work gradually assumed such an extent that a special "Art Protection Office" had to be set up at the Commander-in-Chief Southwest under the Ic Department under Sonderführer (K) Dr. Hagemann, who was later followed by an equal office at the "Plenipotentiary General of the German Armed Forces in Italy". The orders required for the preservation of the art treasures were so far-reaching that most of the proposals had to be subjected to a tactical-operational examination of their feasibility by Ia-Abteilung.

The work was carried out one after the other in accordance with the situation in the Italian area: earth and air operations; in spite of this section-by-section completion demands could hardly be met, so that it was necessary to gradually resort to the most varied forms of temporary assistance. The following, I will confine myself to the activities of the Commander-in-Chief South, without discussing manifold independent measures of the "Plenipotentiary General" and the individual units.

The simplest measure was the prohibition of entering culturally valuable individual sites in the city and countryside by means of appropriate prohibition signs. Signed by me personally I have signed hundreds of them and I can state that no case of transgression has come to my knowledge. In many of these castles, churches, etc., works of art, archives or libraries from endangered places were moved, as far as the German transport space at all allowed. Examples are the world-famous art treasures of the monastery of Monte Cassino had taken to Orvieto by the "Panzer Division Hermann Göring" but were then handed over to the Vatican by the Commander-in-Chief Southwest storage in Rome; many other art treasures directly secured by the troops were also handed over to the Vatican. Precautionary safekeeping of the Florentine works of art in various villas solitary located in the Florence area was the second task; insofar as these depots, such as Camaldoli Monastery and S. Eremo, became endangered by the development of the situation, the treasures were transferred South Tyrol area. The Medicean villa in Poggio a Caiano, located in the Florentine area, with its valuable Florentine works of art, was excluded from the defense zone on my direct orders. Moreover, in Ferrara, with its culturally and historically valuable installations, the art treasures temporarily deposited in Marzabotta were definitively put into storage. Lack of transport space finally demanded to leave the art treasures in the cities, but to wall them in bullet-proof. This was done in all cases where not possible to declare the cities in question as "hospital cities" or "open cities." Verona, which as a central transportation hub was a particular point of attraction for Allied air raids, was also one of these examples.

Secondarily, cities of cultural-historical interest and ecclesiastical tradition were out of the battlefield as hospital cities. The Allies were usually informed of this by the Vatican. The declaration as a "hospital city" included the evacuation of the city of all military offices that had nothing to do with hospital service. These places included: the episcopal city of Anagni, south of Rome; the city of Tivoli, east of Rome; the mountainous central Italian city of Siena, later declared an "Open City"; the

city of St. Francis, Assisi, where, in addition, most of the works of art from Umbria were taken; finally, Merano, as an example of mutual respect for the Red Cross.

Militarily and diplomatically difficult were the circumstances for the thorough solution in the form of international law of the declaration of a city as an "Open City" This was attempted in many places, but it could not be achieved in all of them. In many cases, we have moved to "neutralization" or "demilitarization" as a workaround. In both cases this meant: Clearing the cities of all military posts and troops, blocking traffic for troops and soldiers, cordoning off by field gendarmerie or by fixed barriers, etc. It is obvious that these measures did not always meet with the enthusiastic approval of the troops and also raised the strongest military concerns. One example is Rome, which had already declared an "open city" under Marshal Cavallero and Badoglio The Commander-in-Chief Southwest confirmed the declaration and tightened the cordon considerably

The central Italian cities of art, such as Orvieto, Perugia, Urbino, Siena, not to be defended according to orders, which meant an extension of demilitarization

Florence with its unique art treasures was already declared an "Open City" in February 1944. I was positively disposed to a request by the Cardinal Archbishop to renounce defense of the city Since I could not obtain the same concession from the Allied side, the Allied march through was blocked by various blasts, unfortunately also destroying the wonderful bridge over the Arno Combat operations did not take place in the city.

Timely evacuation of Pisa prevented damage to well-known cultural and historical monuments.

San Marino - like Siena - was, from a tactical point of view, the center of a significant defensive position. The fact that I nevertheless declared it an "Open City" may be regarded as a measure of my obligingness. Specially commissioned officers and diplomatic officials vouched compliance with my order

On the Via Emilia, that is, in northern Italy, the cities of Parma, with its magnificent Farnese Theater in Palazzo della Pilotta, Reggio, Modena and Bologna were neutralized in July 1944. Bologna was the key point of defense at that time. Requests by the Mayor and the Archbishop of Bologna for the declaration of their hometown as an "Open City" met with favorable assessment and triggered the most diverse security measures In fact, there was no fighting for the historic center of the city. commanding general of the XIV Panzer Corps, v. Senger-Etterlin, had the greatest merit this.

Ravenna was demilitarized early and later evacuated without a fight. Venice was designated as the rallying point for all art treasures not sufficiently secured in eastern Italy. Despite severe naval objections, the problem of securing Venice was satisfactorily resolved.

Vicenza was virtually neutralized by diverting all military traffic and clearing the city.

Padua was also completely demilitarized. The urgent request and in consultation with the Bishop of Padua, which allowed, among other things, preserve the precious Giotto Chapel.

Equal security was provided for the Certosa di Pavia monastery south of Milan by an immediate order from Commander-in-Chief Southwest.

These few details about the activities of the Commander-in-Chief Southwest may suffice; they will allow the conclusion that the German Wehrmacht the humanly possible to protect the ancient Italian culture. Those who do not know Italy may not be able to form a correct picture of the extent of the German Wehrmacht's securing measures. He will find the right yardstick if he compares the Italian cities listed by name, which were little or not at all destroyed, with German cities such as Würzburg, Nuremberg, Freiburg, Dresden, etc. This should also give foreign observers food for thought.

Commander-in-Chief Southwest received many letters of thanks from the Church and the Administration during the war. Instead of many, only a few sentences from the letter of the Archbishop of Chieti are reproduced: "We from Chieti were only seven kilometers away from the line of operations under German domination for a good eight months. During all this time I never experienced any affront on the part of the German command, especially not from Field Marshal Kesselring and the generals who were under his command. On the contrary, I have been supported by the latter - and especially by Field Mars Kesselring - as it was a matter of saving the city of Chieti and everything else that could possibly be saved, and encouraged in every way, as far as the war situation allowed.

To sum up, I must conscientiously declare, and say so without fear of denial, that Field Marshal Kesselring's conduct and deeds here are worthy of any public praise. And this opinion is also that of my clergy and - as far as I know - also of all right-thinking people in Chieti. It is thanks to Field Marshal Kesselring that the city of Chieti was saved in the midst of general destruction. I owe special praise to Generals Günther Baade, Feurstein and

Mälzer for all the good they did to this blessed city under the leadership of Kesselring These names and the name of the Field Marshal will always be blessed here

Dear Dr. Laternser - (my lawyer in my trial) - I have written what my conscience as Archbishop has commanded me to write and I am very happy that I have been able to contribute something - even if in a small way - to the proof of the Field Marshal's innocence. To this testimony I also add - imploring the Almighty - the prayer that he enlighten and guide the lords judges, so that they may pronounce a sentence that corresponds to the requirements of justice."

My troops were recognized as knowing their trade; measures to make abandoned terrain difficult to pass were considered in principle, plans were drawn up, practical preparatory work was carried out, but all this was done only in those cases that had the highest tactical or operational importance and did not destroy cultural assets. Individual exceptions may confirm the rule It may also be argued that the Allied bombings relieved us of some of the work that could burden us today. But: check the Italian production sites from Rome to the border; you will find that they have been preserved almost without exception or that they have been rendered useless only for a short time by the removal or destruction of key parts

Flooding and marshes are the responsibility of the Germans. However, we have accepted the greatest difficulties in order not to make a later reuse of the soil impossible for years by supplying seawater.

Almost all seaports were prepared for destruction. I refer only to Genoa and Venice to show that the destruction threatening the life of the port was not Billions in value were thus preserved for the Italian economy.

The war annihilates. German endeavor in Italy, however, let the human-ethical points of view have a say in all military considerations and measures After the process

On the same train as my officer witnesses, but separated from them, I traveled from Mestre to Wolfsberg (Carinthia). My comrades were greatly impressed The British commander of Wolfsberg was understanding and

saw in me, as in Mackensen and Mälzer, honest soldiers. Thanks to him, the officers and non-commissioned officers of the camp; through them the "bunker stay" became bearable. One (Captain Kennedy, Austrian émigré named Holtmann) was an exception, whose heart was a stone, whose spirit was hatred and revenge, and whose hands were at fault with the blameless! I heard that a year later fate reached him and took him where his cynicism sent poor people

A conversation with a first lieutenant of the camp: "I don't understand how England and America can completely disarm." He: "Economic reasons make it imperative." Me: "And if - which I assume for sure - rearmament is necessary to save the last, there will be a rude awakening." He: "Yes, that would already be great bad luck!" Couldn't this have been avoided - for the benefit of the whole? I believe that all statesmen of today would answer this question in the affirmative. Wolfsberg was an Austrian camp; we did not have the impression of being strangers, intruders. We were the center of a self-contained circle of internees who knew how to enrich life with art performances, lectures, works. Lively Austrian soul! Soon after my arrival, a former SS major came to me and said that everything was ready for my escape. I thanked him, but firmly declared that I would never, by escaping, give my opponents (I could only regard the court as such) faith in their lawfulness and thus make a confession of guilt on my part. On July 4, 1947, my and my comrades' death sentence was changed to life imprisonment. At that time and later I often explained that this change was an aggravation of punishment. When once an English colonel asked me "why", I could only say that there were limits; for me, as a German field marshal who felt innocent, the execution of the sentence by shooting would be a dignified end of a soldier, but being together with criminals in the penitentiary would be a humiliation and dishonor! Our German priest Gruber is still remembered - an exemplary and a servant of mercy in the understanding of his office

A sign of genuine unifying comradeship was the transfer of Mackensen, Mälzer and me from Wolfsberg to Werl in October 1947. One had the feeling that the accompanying officers wanted to set themselves apart from the sentence and penal system, which was incomprehensible even to them, by taking special care. With the opening and closing of the large outer gates of the penitentiary Werl, one almost physically felt the cut in life. The complete equality with the habitual criminals was made very clear to us during the demonstration by the deputy "governor", who believed he had to tell us that only that which was granted to the most serious criminal could

be approved for us.

Years passed in the ups and downs of penitentiary life. The not very pleasant time until 1950 was compensated to a certain extent by the improvements in the following years. I noted with some embarrassment that it was only with the support of British authorities that we were able to enforce our legal claims with German, especially Bavarian authorities, and that the British and American authorities went to the limits of their jurisdiction to meet our demands in economic matters, e.g., prisoner of war wages, prisoner costs. Besides the last "Governor" of the "Allied Prison" Werl, Lieutenant Colonel Vickers, who was limited in his care for us only by the tightly drawn regulations, I want to mention General Bishop, whose intervention was the first impetus for the improvements that began later. In the legal field I will also mention only one name: Sir Alfred Brown, the chief "Legal Advisor" to the English High Commissioner, who confronted us in his distinguished manner and obviously, as a responsible jurist, suffered inwardly from the legal conditions he had to represent. I was less pleased with a very distinguished general who, after a cursory glance at my cell, which was as cold as it was damp and unfriendly, managed to reach the remarkable verdict: "Very nice!" Only my good upbringing prevented me from replying with something like, "Do you think, General, that after a short time as an innocent prisoner you would still find this cell 'very nice'?"

As a 63-year-old field marshal, I became a bag gluer, as which I was recognized as having made considerable achievements. My work colleagues, for the most part "war criminals", were nice people and made work and life easier. When, after a few months, the "deputy" asked me how I liked the work, I replied, "Quite well - but even in my wildest dreams I could not have imagined that as a German field marshal I would still have to work as a bag gluer." The next day, manual labor was over for me; I turned to historical studies.

One morning, suddenly, from one half hour to another, we were moved to another house. Reason was kept secret; I still don't know it today; perhaps they wanted better surveillance by the English, since we were moved to the corridor where the punished English lay. It was a miserable time! Woe betide anyone who spoke to us; even when the prison priest visited us, a surveillance man was supposed to be with us. A small example: My wife occasionally brought cakes and cookies for a short visit since my gall bladder was giving me trouble with the prison food. She delivered the small package to the German officer, who delivered it to the English officer, who gave it to the English ward officer to hand out. An English reporter who happened to

be present was a witness and published a - one can only say - lying article in an English newspaper; the article told of parcels (!) constantly coming to me participation in English rations, of which we only saw daily how they were handed out to the English prisoners and which seemed to us to be a feast, while we got the really bad and inadequate German soup, and of other benefits. The result was the punitive transfer of three English officials, including the "governor"; I was told by an Englishman who spoke remarkably good German, "And you can't be punished because you were of good faith!!!"

But even these times passed; better ones dawned when we were assigned a special hallway in a rebuilt wing, where the "dining" - and the "recreation-room" were well equipped. That German men and women contributed to this is but one example of the deed Christianity of German people. In particular, the tireless vice-president of the Red Cross of Westphalia, Mrs. Weecks, the "Angel of Werl" should be remembered here.

On the other hand, we did not make any progress in our legal cases! The official England held on to the untenable verdicts regardless of all convincing counter-evidence and supplementary evidence which could not be produced at the time of the trial. I cannot imagine that the British responsible circles can still believe in the legitimacy of the proceedings, even if Kirkpatrick's open letter to the press gives us food for thought. The findings of the British High Commissioner stand in irreconcilable contrast to our certainly subjective, but comprehensive knowledge of the individual trial cases. For this reason I wanted - after having obtained the agreement of the Chancellor - to request the Speaker of the British House of Commons to have the war crimes cases examined in general and legal terms by a mixed parliamentary commission on the spot, i.e. in Werl. This commission would - I assume, given the legal sense of the independent British parliamentarians - have ascertained the opposing view of the law applied, manifold deficiencies and gaps in the trial records and of the evaluation of incriminating and exculpatory witnesses, and have found and proposed a way out of this inextricable situation. However, I was forbidden to pursue my intention further. Too bad! I understand that the subordinate services carried out the instructions from above, even though they themselves had doubts; it should not be further discussed that we Germans had been sentenced to death or to the harshest prison sentences for carrying out orders after 1945. I have not found understandable reason for the mostly negative attitude of those responsible, since law must prevail even against an incomprehensible, ill-advised, even incited popular sentiment; it is also

difficult to comprehend that one tried to stand behind a Four-Power Agreement when it had already lost its justification and its legal content. A four-power agreement can never be regarded as valid, binding international law that has been disavowed *urbi et orbi* "human rights" solemnly proclaimed in Switzerland in 1948 by the UN committee. It has been violated almost every point by the victorious Allied justice. On the occasion of a trip to a military hospital, I spoke with my English companion officer about Bevin's successor; Morrison and Shawcross were mentioned as candidates. To my companion's question why not Shawcross, I replied, "I would regret the choice of Shawcross, whose attitude I know from Nuremberg and his later speeches. Bevin was above all a politician and a man who, as a non-lawyer, got up with some of his legal scholars put before him; I can understand that; but if a recognized top jurist still maintains today that Nuremberg law is binding law, then for me he has ceased to be considered a jurist and cannot be considered by me either, because of his dubious attitude to clear legal questions, as the suitable man for the post of Secretary of State has to decide ultimate responsibility in all war crimes matters."

All in all, a bad seed was sown in 1945, which could cause the greatest worries to the ancient civilized peoples.

When I received my death sentence in May 1947, I believed I was equal to what was expected of me, since I had a rich life behind me that could experience no further increases. Today, five years later, I must confess that the outwardly so defamatory life has nevertheless brought new springs to flow. I had always been in the habit of reflecting on my daily experience at the end of the day, but I had never had so much time to come to myself, my surroundings and the course of time. I strove to judge objectively, see shortcomings as a disease and to substitute understanding for revenge and hatred. With this attitude it was natural that I became a mediator within the community of destiny and outwardly to the individual personalities of the custodial power. Gradually, in this way, in place of the hostile attitude caused by the enemy propaganda, it was possible to find understanding for us as people and soldiers. The men who were so great to stand up for us in defiance of the prevailing mood and who made our living conditions easier have already been mentioned - they did more than the many who devoted themselves to "reeducation". When the heart speaks, one can gladly dispense with other questionable experiments. This binder holds!

Many things took place during my time as a prisoner could captivate a

person who had previously stood in the middle of the world more one is removed from daily criticism and the immediate influences of events the easier it is to see through the real and unreal confusion of this world. Some things, which almost became a set of beliefs, remained in me as spiritual possessions. During the years of contemplation I read a lot of German and foreign newspapers and writings. In doing so, I noticed something that seems to correspond to a characteristic of us Germans that often made me blush. I am stating a truism that we Germans achieved something in the war. Liddel Hart wrote about it:

"In such an analysis, one finds that Allied attacks rarely succeeded unless our forces had a superiority in strength of more than 5:1 over the Germans, accompanied by air superiority that at least doubled, if not tripled, superiority on the ground. In some special (striking) cases, our attacks failed to break through where they had a numerical superiority of 10:1, multiplied by air. Even where complete prerequisite for the tactical advantage of defense over attack was given, it remains embarrassingly palpable that on average the Germans outnumbered their Western opponents, man for man. On the Eastern Front they repeatedly withstood superiorities on the ground that were as high, but these were not multiplied by air superiority, nor by such a ratio of mechanical firepower as in the West."

In contrast to this, I remember various German statements and writings in which it was written about the "ingenious", that is, in German, the "stupid" higher German leadership and about the fact that the German soldier was a pitiful, lawless man virtually suffered under his superiors and had even been continuously harassed by them. As an old soldier with more than 40 years of active military service, who can claim that he even enjoyed a certain popularity from lieutenant up to beyond prison, in spite of strictness and high demands, I cannot understand such a "reportage". I readily admit that mistakes were made by leaders and sub-leaders. But if in the first years of the war we passed all campaigns victoriously and in the shortest time, one can only assume - if one considers the critical thesis to be correct - that on the Allied side even greater "incompetents" must have led. I express myself very popularly in order to put the disparaging criticism in perspective. I readily confess that in many cases orders from above were called nonsense because the individual soldiers were simply not capable. Bigger picture. However, if they were really real soldiers, they were just as happy to forget this criticism after success and rejoice in the success. I also readily admit that mistakes, even big mistakes, were made.

treatment of subordinates With interest I followed and still follow the philosophical thoughts about this I am more for the simple and stick to my guiding principle: "Treat the other person as you would like to be treated yourself." Scolding is now part of the soldier's trade! We generals and the entire soldierly and civilian German people recognize the achievements of the German soldier, the compatriot at the front without reservation, even if there have of course been pseudoheroes among them must be all the more astonishing to every thinking person when he reads or hears that our soldierly education and training has been a summation of mistakes and that one must according to the democratic principles, e.g. of the American army Here I am standing on my head! Did we fail? Did five to ten German soldiers always have to be used against one American or Russian?

I had the distinction of having a large number of the best German divisions under my command and got to know all peoples except the northerners as opponents Everything does not suit everyone! What suits the Italian can be poison for us and vice versa. Uniformity can tear down the whole building! The great successes of the German front soldier would have been impossible if there had not been a conspiratorial comradeship between the men and their superiors My heart laughed in my bones when I saw just this inner bond during visits to the front I was particularly proud of the fact that in 1945 the German soldier generally surrendered his weapons to the enemy in an exemplary attitude. I took part in 1918. It was different then! I considered the attitude of the German soldier as a triumph of discipline, training and the harmony of leadership and troops. True, improving, objective criticism is necessary and right; but must Germans always foul our own nest? And finally: We can change many things and adapt to the advanced spirit of the times and new valuable insights; but one should preserve what is peculiar to the people have respect for tradition Let us beware of becoming rootless. I know different foreign methods of education and their results. I warn against mindless adoption of a foreign system. I do not presume to judge the value or unvalue of the individual system; what may be right for one people need not fit us Germans without further ado. I am sure that within a very short time some of the advantages of the former system will be recognized, without then being able to return to a system tailored to us Germans The reputation of the German as a soldier has been until now the capital which allowed the greatest tensions to be solved in a peaceful way. We have the duty to maintain this reputation in order to preserve peace. The dead who fell for Germany demand this; then - but only then - their dying was not senseless!

I had a hard time deciding to write this book. I did it finally, in order to participate also from my point of view in the truthful rendition of a good piece of German history, in order to set our outstanding German soldiers a memorial and in order to contribute something to the fact that the war in its whole totality and severity is recognized and thus becomes actually only the ultima ratio of the peoples. The book should not become a panegyric. For thoughtful people it proves the old knowledge of life about the relativity of all events; but to the youth it wants to say that in the striving for right action the meaning of life is fulfilled and that perfection is not granted to man on this earth. In the old word "errare humanum est" the demand for self-discipline of man and the admonition to the neighbor to keep moderation in the judgment of the other man, the other peoples, res

Appendix

THE GERMAN AIR FORCE. ITS RISE AND FALL

During the Reichswehr period, technical tests were carried out on the smallest scale in the aircraft field, and later practical flying was also carried out, especially in Russia, and flying skills were deepened at the DVS (Deutsche Verkehrsfliegerschule). The basic idea behind these efforts was not to lose touch with the air development of the other powers and to theoretically consider the possible uses in order to derive operational principles. Undoubtedly, work was done with passion in all aeronautical fields; the result was - objectively speaking - modest. The limitations imposed by inter-Allied control and the chronic shortage of money were too strong to allow more to be achieved.

Aviation did not receive a significant boost until Hitler took over the government (January 1933), during the formation of which Göring demanded "Commissariat of Aviation", which was soon expanded to become the "Reich Aviation Ministry" clear that everything that had had anything to do with aviation in earlier years now flowed together this central office and the subordinate offices (Luftgaue) that were soon created Next to Göring, Milch was the decisive personality who, despite his youth, proved himself in an outstanding way in building up the Luftwaffe. In addition, there were the former aviation officers serving in the Reichswehr, such as Sperrle, Student, WimmerGrauert, Volkmann, Bieneck, who provided the framework into which the army and navy soldiers without aviation training could be integrated They were few but qualified officers, among whom Generals Wever and Stumpff stood out.

I, too, was incorporated into the Air Force - against my will. I must confess, however, that I have never worked so wholeheartedly, and therefore so successfully, in any assignment office as I did in this small Luftwaffe, which was still being built up The secret lay in the subject matter and in the manner of Göring, who made clear demands, even if they could hardly be met, but then let us work independently until after a quarter

or half a year he reviewed the performance in order to make double or triple demands, which were also satisfied on the whole. Uncomplicated and focused on the big picture, the demands were very simple: within the shortest possible time, Germany must have the largest and best aviation weapon in the world. Douhet was his role model, and General Wever knew how to translate the idea of a strong operational air force into a well thought-out work program. That the justified wishes of the army and navy were not neglected is evident from the fact that German aviation had the first fully operational close air combat units with dive bombers of effectiveness, and that, contrary to the views of the old naval aviators, maritime reconnaissance could be flown by twin-engine land-based aircraft. These observations touch on an area that was sovereignly regulated by the German Air Force, but whose regulation was less in keeping with the other branches of the Wehrmacht. With the appearance of Goering as Aviation Commissioner and Aviation Minister, this question was decided.

The Luftwaffe was not a part of the Army and the Navy, but an independent third part of the German Wehrmacht. Even if the division could have been considered more advantageous, it would have been a serious mistake with the most damaging effects: reasons of war economy, construction and procurement, as well as for personnel considerations at the time of its creation. Admittedly, the chosen organization did not prove itself in the course of the World War, and even had a particularly detrimental effect on the naval sector. But it would not have to occur, indeed should not have occurred, if the initial organization and the trained officers had remained as bureau chiefs and inspectors. Responsible for this unhealthy development are the same phenomena that caused the decline and collapse of the German air force. More about this later!

A very brief look at the organization, which - good in itself - should be considered excellent because of the almost exemplary mutual understanding of the authoritative heads.

Göring worked only in emergencies, but then with an unmistakable, passionate persistence. Many of the program points of the General Staff originated from his insight and creative power. Secretary of State Milch led the ministry in praxis: he had a happy hand in it. General Wever and his

successors, Generals Kesselring, Stumpff, and Jeschonnek, as Chief of Staff, worked on the problems, taking into account foreign experience, including war games, and set the tasks according to goal and time. General Wimmer as technical chief and General Kesselring as administrative chief were executive organs of command.

More than could be done during these years. By the time it was prepared for the invasion of the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia, the air force was ready for action, albeit weak, barely trained in unit attack, and technically in the process of conversion to modern aircraft. By the beginning of the Polish War however, almost all units had converted to war-ready aircraft, even if the Ju 88 was still missing; the operational and tactical principles of use had been established, even if they could not yet have become common property for all. The Fliegerwaffe had its own esprit de corps. And yet - it was not yet ready! possible that, if there had been deliberate preparation for war, new designs could have been accelerated so that the Ju 88 would already have been available as a fighter, production could have been more widely spread and the newly introduced types such as the Me 109, Me 110 and Ju 87 would have been available in much greater numbers. But the expansion would have been at the expense of thoroughness, especially in the area of flight and operational training. The losses, which in themselves were very high, would have been even greater. As for the broadening and operational readiness of the Fliegerwaffe, I must repeat what we reported to the Commander-in-Chief in 1939: while it would have to be considered almost a miracle to create an operational, modern Fliegerwaffe in little more than five years, the war had come too soon, if necessary at all. While fully recognizing the unique successes of the German air forces in the first campaigns, it must be frankly conceded that what was conceived in its main parts as an operational air force was essentially used and consumed as a close combat air force, so that operational air warfare was bound to fall short. What specific reasons were to blame for this?

First of all, the ideas of the time about the air war:

1. People lived in European concepts and therefore did not expect a global war and the resulting demands regarding flight range, airspeed, climbing ability, armament and bomb load

2. Göring and General Wever, Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe, had the right feeling for the air war tailored to the European area. The General Staff also set the right operational and tactical framework requirements, the limits of which drawn only by the technical possibilities of the time

3. The calculated paper values mostly met the specified requirements, while the aircraft flown almost without exception only partially met the target values. As a result aircraft required and calculated for the European long-haul destinations no longer able to reach the most distant target groups

4. Ministry of Aviation came to terms with these conditions all the more readily because the use of the revolutionary dive bombers meant that the desired effect could be expected with a minimum deployment of aircraft, and so much material, time and raw materials could be saved in construction and deployment that the planned air force could certainly minimum strength considered necessary at the time

5. The more the introduced airplanes fell short of the demands made, the more clear-sighted, progressive men, who, however, could only gradually assert their warning voice conditions for the long-range bomber were set

As early as 1938, Heinkel had achieved sensational success with his He 116, which made the construction of a modern fighter with calculated values of 540 km/h and almost 7,000 km range seem feasible. As is so often the case - I believe it was the General Luftzeugmeister (General Udet) himself - the demands were exaggerated and the giant machine was also required to have a dive capability, which the machine could not fulfill. Attempts to bring the project to maturity were unsuccessful.

This was all the more disadvantageous and consequential because the Army's requirements for close air support also met with a passionate heart,

were becoming ever greater so that to satisfy them much of the air operational forces had to be employed in supporting the Army in the nearer and wider enemy space. Many of these tasks were on the borderline of the operational task area.

On the success side, Air Force leadership at all levels did the right thing. And yet:

commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe knew that we had gone to war with an unfinished and numerically inadequate air force; he saw from the daily casualty and inventory reports the rapid decline of the units in material and personnel terms

The commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe knew that the battle- and campaign-decisive successes had come about only because the troops, flying crews and technical personnel first, had mastered the task assigned to them to an extent bordering on depletion, and that the operational forces, in order to plug gaps in close combat aviation, were involved in the Army's fighting

The Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe knew that in the Battle of Britain desired objective could not be achieved partly because of the inadequate range of the otherwise excellent fighters and partly because of the non-existence of heavy four-engine bomber forces with long range, high airspeed and rate of climb, large bomb load and strong armament

Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force should therefore have made the obvious demand for unlimited expansion of the air forces and created technical and training conditions for the expansion of the already existing air forces and for the establishment of the operational bomber forces

In examining the question, it must be admitted that at the beginning of the war, Göring was able to realize his plans without any special intervention from above. The limit was drawn, among other things, by the possibility of expansion of a weapon created out of nothing, which was still justifiable at all, and by the training time, which could only be shortened to the detriment of operational capability. It must also be admitted that air armament began on an increased scale after the French campaign, while the Army forces were partly demobilized, and that in the fall of 1941 the aircraft procurement program was placed first in the OKW procurement program. So far, everything seemed to be in order. But by the beginning of 1940, the idea, which had a decisive effect on the Luftwaffe's armament policy, had taken hold that only those projects should be pushed forward which could still be used at the front during the war, the duration of which seemed limited.

Implicitly, this meant abandoning many design tasks or working on them at half strength, which in turn meant nothing other than foregoing further development of a decisive modern air force. Here the harmful influences of misunderstood "lightning victories" become visible, although the Battle of Britain and excerpts from the campaign in Russia clearly showed the deficiencies of our air armament and measures to remedy them did not need to be sought. Certainly, the shortage of raw materials was a fact, but it should never have extended to the most vital part of the entire war armament, the design and procurement of aircraft.

If the vital further development of the air force - and I express myself very cautiously - had been dispensed with too generously at an inopportune time - as early as 1940 - the events of the war made it necessary to intervene in the substance, which meant the beginning of the end. I must state unequivocally that it was not the great combat losses during the first campaigns up to and including 1941, nor the bloodletting in the fight against England and in the North Sea that hit the air force to the core; the losses, heavy as they were, could always be replenished; they provided indispensable knowledge for the healthy further development of the air force in technical and tactical terms. Decline was initiated by the extraordinarily loss-ridden deployment of the school units in the East and in the Mediterranean, whose losses could no longer be compensated. As a result, replacements were decisively cut back in terms of numbers, quality and time. Decline was accelerated by the ongoing deployment of heavy

combat units over long sea routes in the Mediterranean against modernly equipped invasion fleets, the fight against which would have required aircraft and a level of training of crews that could have been available if the constructive high performance of our engineers had been exhausted and air warfare developments had been taken into account. There was no lack of voices from within the Air Force itself who repeatedly pointed out, as I did, as a shouter in the fray, the urgency of realizing modern ideas in air warfare. was the front missing from this chorus, which first noted enemy fighter development at Dunkirk (1940), the technically perfected defensive organization over England (1940/41), the enemy chaff method over Malta (1941/42), the first four-engine high-performance square near Tunis, and finally, over Germany, the perfection of day and night attacks in closed formation and demanded decisive measures

Who was to blame that these signs of a change in air warfare did not trigger appropriate action? If one takes into account that, despite all constrictions and restrictions, a usable four-engine fighter had already been developed in 1939/40, and that in 1939 tenders for a jet aircraft had gone out, resulting in usable designs in the Me 262 and Ar 234 and, despite avoidable delays in 1943 in a convincing test object that could still be expected to turn out fair war against Germany in 1944, one will understand even less the neglect of German air armament

I see the reasons in the following:

1. For all his intermittent emphasis on the importance of the Fliegerwaffe and special recognition of the German Luftwaffe's initial successes, Hitler had little regard for the Luftwaffe. He was an army soldier, his authoritative military environment consisted of army soldiers; he had granted Göring full responsibility and all rights over German aviation and knew it to be in such good hands in the build-up years that he did not concern himself intensively with this part of the Wehrmacht and thus gradually distanced himself from it internally. This fact remains untouched, even if he intervened in later years and supervised the air armament himself.

2. As much as Hitler had all the threads of warfare in his hands, one could hardly speak of a well thought-out "Wehrmacht leadership", since the variety of obligations and tasks inevitably caused fragmentation, much was dictated by momentary inspirations and finally the constant preoccupation with the smallest incidents at the front and in the armament prevented or made difficult overview of the major events and contexts. This means, transferred to aviation, that Hitler, biased in his activity as "army commander," was no longer fully aware of the interests of the Luftwaffe or, despite knowledge, subordinated them to the certainly justified demands of the army. In addition, Goering had lost much of his influential position and was therefore no longer able to successfully represent aviation interests.

3. Until the end of 1941, the will to give primacy to the Luftwaffe was still present in the directives, at least in theory. This time, the failure of armament was due to unclear ideas about the duration of the war, related gaps and weaknesses in the aircraft programs, to conceptions of the conduct of operational air warfare on both the friendly and enemy sides that did not quite correspond to reality, and to too much indulgence in representation of aeronautical interests to Hitler and the other branches of the Wehrmacht. Up to that point, many eye-opening reinforcement and improvement of the air forces but neither could one speak of a decline in. One thing, however, was already missing at that time in the field of personnel: the complete utilization of all available sources in order to meet increased requirements in the following period by a higher distribution of best-trained crews.

From the winter of 1941/42, gaps and deficiencies became apparent in all areas that would have had to be remedied in the following years of the war, and which were also the subject of much talk but no more than attempts.

This was justified as follows:

1. highest Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe leadership gave no credence to the expansion of British and American air forces, from which it believed it

could derive the right to tread short even in the entire aviation field

2. The shortage of raw materials, especially fuel, aluminum, steel, was a fact; however, it did not have to take effect to such an extent and to the detriment of the air force. In armament planning and raw material distribution, the sovereign head with the necessary overview and the necessary supervisory capabilities and powers was missing. not enough to draw up a production target plan and a general distribution of raw materials, which often exceeded the given raw material and production capacity For this purpose, the demand carriers (Army for tanks, Navy for submarines) were far too filled with the importance and urgency of their tasks have put aside their interests in favor of the Luftwaffe out of their own insight If a case was really presented to Hitler for a final decision, then, for example, at a moment when there was a fire somewhere in Russia, increased tank supplies were more important to him than a long-range bomber squadron Anyone who has even the slightest insight into the technical processes knows that such momentary decisions changed before months, i.e. before the end of a partial program without creating a disastrous mess The "Ministry of Armaments" formed in the course of the war improved a lot without being able to create ideal conditions since initially aviation was not subordinate it and after the subordination lacked watertight program, the creation of which was delayed on going changes resulting from momentary decisions

3. Air Force Commander-in-Chief and his technical and tactical aides partly to blame

For the advanced period of the war, Göring's intermittent bouts of work mania were not enough; much escaped him in this way and remained forgotten. With the loss of his supremacy with Hitler, Göring had lost his combative élan to fight for the airmen's demands to the point of self-sacrifice. Worst of all, in the end he not regarded as a competent representative of his office either by Hitler or by those around him or by the other commanders-in-chief To entrust entire representation for months Chiefs of Staff alone, who were in themselves exceptionally capable, was a substitute; it was obvious that a Chief of Staff, by virtue of his position and youth, could not, or could only insufficiently, assert himself

with Hitler in matters affecting the existence of aviation if other interests were opposed to it

Just as Hitler could not bring himself to take a clear stand within the Wehrmacht Göring lacked the unswerving will to concentrate all work on what was vital in each case. When one reads today how they decisions, resorted to tempes, in order to be able to stand in front of themselves as if they had done something, one feels ashamed even as a distant observer. Some examples:

After it was finally recognized at the beginning of 1943 that the medium bombers were obsolete, that a viable solution for a heavy bomber could not be expected in the foreseeable future and in large numbers, but that, on the other hand, the deadly danger of Allied bomber attacks was becoming very apparent in the Mediterranean and at home, and that neither material nor industrial capacity was sufficient for the unabbreviated implementation of the old bomber and fighter programs, which were in themselves inadequate, it was simply not possible for Göring's shift of overall effort to a strengthened fighter program. I can still hear him when he replied to me in Rome in a loud tone, "So you, too, want the end of the bomber forces, the forces that have accomplished such unheard-of things!" Mei-

After a very clear "yes" with the explanation that the design of the bombers could be continued and production resumed once decisive successes had been achieved in air defense, he showed no understanding, except for a palpable sense of dissatisfaction. Wanting everything sometimes means losing everything! We were on our way!

Today one cannot say a word about the fact that the "jet fighters" would have given a different face to air war over Germany, probably even to the outcome of the war *****). Even during the war there were enough men in the Luftwaffe (officers like Galland, Baumbach, engineers like Franke,

***** Klostermann, an ace Allied fighter, writes in his book, "Me262 was.... until then the most sensational aircraft . . . and could be addressed as the queen of fighters; it had phenomenal speed (toward 1,000 km/h), terrible armament, and well-designed armor of 89 mm. It was the plane that could have revolutionized the air war . . . The 'people's fighter' Henschel was also an impressive aircraft . . . »

Knemeyer) and in industry (like Heinkel, Messerschmitt, Tank, Siebel) recognized this inevitable development all, as already mentioned, the first conditions were tendered in 1939, and by the beginning of 1943 one was already well on the way to closing the gap with a usable prototype - but the decision and the action were missing, because Hitler, in full misunderstanding (encouraged to do so by a careless statement of Messerschmitt), had this unique fighter converted into a little usable jet bomber - the hopeful development sank hopelessly

In the same line lie the already mentioned wrong decisions in questions of the production of a heavy bomber and long-range reconnaissance aircraft, the lack of which severely impaired the effectiveness of the submarine weapon. If one adds the avoidable disruptions in the build-up and deployment of the V-weapons - I am deliberately leaving out of account the destruction of the V-weapons testing site at Peenemünde - and the expanded anti-aircraft program, then one's heart aches to see such a decline in the German air force after such a unique beginning

There is a lot of talk about how the worst could have been avoided with temporary help. How about that?

Some say that a different organization, i.e. the establishment of an independent operational air force and an independent army and navy air, would have achieved more and, above all, would have prevented the decline absolutely impossible to build up more; one must also take into account were experts in the Aviation Ministry who worked fanatically. It is possible that larger numbers would have been brought out by the individual military units, but this remains a controversial question! possible that a material balance could have been achieved the high commands of the army and navy had renounced one or the other armored division and submarine flotilla in favor of their airmen; but whether, in the course of the ever-increasing tensions, the organizational coexistence would not have developed into a disruptive working against each other is hard to answer, but possible, if not probable. Others believe that the catastrophic decline of the Luftwaffe could have been avoided by a change in the high command of the Luftwaffe. I also hold this view on the assumption that a change in personnel would have occurred no later than the beginning of 1943.

Suitable men would have been available, whereby I refer primarily to Field Marshals v. Richthofen, v. Greim and Milch. In 1944 or even 1945 it was too late. Still around the turn of the year 1944/45 I was to step in at the request of various air force generals. I cannot be blamed for the fact that at that time I no longer saw any solution in a change of personnel and urgently requested that my person be left out of the game. Here, again, the blame lies with Hitler, who, despite the clear recognition of Goering's obvious inadequacy, did not find the jumping-off but instead burdened himself with even more and thus chose an all the more unsatisfactory solution.

Third parties, in turn, believe - and I am one of them - that the lack of a plan in the overall conduct of the war played a major role in the collapse of the Luftwaffe. I considered and still consider the lack of a war plan as the decisive mistake; it is simply wrong to let oneself be guided by limitation and extension of the war only by the coincidences of the military and political situation, by resentments and misunderstood consideration for allies - to which I also count Japan in this sense! If a war plan had existed, expert investigations would have been carried out in all areas influencing the war effort, would have led to the determination of requirements, the possibilities of cover, to the organizational orientation and to the operational management of the campaigns, probability following decisive disadvantages could have been avoided.

a) Perhaps the hatchet would not have been dug up at all if the entry of England and France into the war had been considered a serious possibility.

b) In the strategic field, plans would have been worked out for the war measures following the defeat of the Western mainland states; they would hardly have provided for disarmament of a part of the Wehrmacht where its reinforcement would have been necessary, and would not have given rise to any vacillation as to whether or not action should be taken against England, and if so - by what means; one might have been sure that these means would have been ready.

c) One would have considered from the outset the importance of the Mediterranean area and the strategic or operational possibilities arising from it, and perhaps placed the emphasis of operations on the south wing. I frankly confess that until I assumed my command in the Mediterranean area, biased in continental strategy, perhaps because I was not responsibly concerned with it, I did not sufficiently appreciate the importance of this area for the grand strategy against the Allies. I can imagine, however, that dealing with this question would have virtually forced the right path, i.e., the right next step: the seizure of the Mediterranean region, upon a responsible group of agents. This would have been possible in 1941 with few forces, from which a war-decisive success could have

d) Never would strategic tasks have come into such conflict with material possibilities if a small top brass concerned exclusively with the big ideas of warfare; this place was missing - Hitler alone could represent it all the less, as he was repeatedly and repeatedly swept into details into which he was only too willing to get carried away

Still others think that the Air Force General Staff misunderstood purpose of the air war and did not do what was vitally necessary with final consistency. To be fair, it should be said again that politics started the war at a time when the Air Force was not yet ready for war. So compromises had to be made.

The first basic requirement was to use the airmen to bring the campaigns to a victorious conclusion. This was done to the greatest possible extent, albeit just enough for the army and navy. The campaigns would never have gone down in history as "blitzkriegs" if it had not been for the Luftwaffe

Critics now speak of the fact that the aviation primarily developed or to be developed for the operational air war would have been used up as army or naval aviation. The program for building up an Operative Air Force was fixed; it was conceived in an exemplary manner under the authoritative influence of Goering by the first Chief of Staff, General Wever, and remained in place during my command. It must be admitted, however, that

the planning was far ahead of the possibility of realization, but this did little harm, since the initial political goals of the time were set in such a way that a far-reaching strong operational aviation was not yet absolutely necessary. Without excusing slowing down of the design and construction of a four-engine bomber which contradicted the demand for operational air warfare must be said that the General Staff and Engineering in their top representation succumbed to the miracle of the dive bomber. Since thinking in the wrong political conception, the range sufficient. The large numbers necessary for warfare could only be achieved in the short build-up period if light and medium types were built that could compensate in dive attacks. With the precision throw of a dive bomber believed - which was also approximately true - to achieve the effect of area throws by formations. If this was true, then the desired destruction effect could be achieved with a minimum of forces without running the risk that a shortage of raw materials would endanger the construction plan of aircraft and that a shortage of fuel would limit the use of the aircraft. I must emphasize once again that the performance required by the General Staff would have been sufficient to combat the European long-range targets had it not been for a drop in performance in the finished design caused the air war to collapse in its original sense. Even the first flights against British shipping should have revealed the deficiencies of our fighter forces and types which were superior to those of the enemy powers, and even more so the Battle of Britain, the attacks against Moscow and the air-sea war in the Mediterranean region and the Arctic.

cessation of development shows a misjudgment of the situation; the failure to take advantage of the front-line experience, which simply could not be overlooked, is a fault shared by all the authoritative agencies of the OKW and the Luftwaffe. In 1940, perhaps even in 1941, it would have been possible to turn the wheel and create an operational long-range air force together with the jet fighters, would have given the war a different face.

But even with full appreciation of the possibilities just indicated one must beware of too great expectations as to the effectiveness of this then available offensive weapon. The number and importance of the tasks to be performed by the operational air force in the course of the war would always have been grossly disproportionate to the number of bomber and long-range reconnaissance forces to be deployed at best. Decisive success would have depended on a focussing of objectives; one would have had to turn

to either naval air warfare or air warfare against the Allied air force or economic warfare. Whether the top leadership would have had the strength to close itself off to individual areas with their urgent and pressing demands, I would almost doubt on the basis of my own experience; it also made it infinitely more difficult for itself, since it did not and finally could not set itself apart from the individual events.

Many critics, especially the young, best minds in the German Air Force, misled into overestimating the effect of long-range bombers against key targets, effort to get the most out of the Luftwaffe that was still at all possible. The Battle of Britain showed that even against key individual attacks can achieve only temporary success, if any at all, and that devastating effects depend not only on the one or other success of a destructive attack but on ongoing hold-down and surveillance. All other campaigns have confirmed that only the most ruthless concentration of all available forces on one target group and its permanent suppression have campaign- or war-decisive success. The atomic bomb, which could have revolutionary effect, was not available.

In the last two years, the uncertainty of the leadership in the definition of the task, in the organization of the technical authorities and means, and in the selection of personnel was downright catastrophic. This was not changed by the fact that Hitler himself reserved task and the supervision of its execution not to a whole decision-designate air forces as the main target of rearmament and maintenance, develop the commander-in-chief of the air force into a staff capable of command with exceptional powers. Thus, we see the picture that a weapon that accomplished unparalleled things in its time of creation and that could have been capable of significantly influencing the outcome of the war, lay on the ground as a wreck most critical period of